



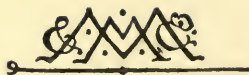
R. S. Cundall

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ONE IMMORTALITY



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TORONTO

ONE IMMORTALITY

BY

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BOOK I
THE WEST

CHAPTER I

THERE are three loves that make and keep the world—the love that binds man and woman into one flesh and soul, the love that draws families into nations, the love that holds the world to God.

Each love is justified in its own Immortality.

All of our life that is worth the living is the expression of one or more of these loves ; all our religions are attempts to explain them ; all our hopes are in their immortalities. Therefore every story that is not confined to the mere trappings of to-day must proceed from them.

This book is about the first.

Venice at sunset, and a ship that came in from the open sea.

They had left Trieste that morning, and all the day had steamed across the sunlit sea. Upon

their right the Dolomites rose up to peaks of snow, and in front the coast of Italy grew more and more distinct. A mellow haze lay on the land and gave it sleepiness and an air of rest in contrast to the ever-moving sea. And in the sunset they came near to Venice.

At first they saw the long low island of the Lido, and behind it the tops of towers and campaniles, clear against the sky; but soon the ship passed into the channel, and across the broad lagoons the city stood revealed.

Who shall picture Venice thus seen beneath the sunset glow? She seemed no city built of men, but rose from out the sea as Aphrodite rose; her palaces and churches were made not of marble nor of stone, but as if grown as pearls grow, underneath the waves. She was a sea-shell cast upon the shore; the dying sun made pink and purple glories on her, it turned the still lagoons to lakes of molten gold.

They came still nearer, passing the gardens where the trees still held their autumn leaves, and then moved slowly to before Saint Mark's.

The great piazza opened. They could see the wonderful cathedral; its bronze horses in the glow were almost living. The campanile pointed

like a finger to the heavens. The steamer nearly stopped. They looked—they looked into the hollow of the shell. The great chamber where its heart was wont to live was filled with lustrous light and living shadow ; the Grand Canal glowed like a shining way that led to heaven.

So to see Venice is to see her in her majesty and truth—to see her as her sons were wont to see when they returned from voyage or victory ; as ambassadors of foreign kings, who came to bring her homage, saw her. Of all cities on the sea she is the queen. To see her, then, is to remember her for ever, and a great pity comes into your heart that she is dead, and that the light which shines from marble and from window is but lent from heaven, and not the light of life. She lived and died, and left her palaces for us to wonder at and try to understand the soul that built them.

‘Surely,’ cried a man upon the deck, ‘it was some sacred fire within their hearts that made her builders what they were. What was this fire ? What was their secret ? What are the secrets of the world ? What is it makes life worth the living ?’

He raised his hat in reverence and in question. Then he became aware of one that answered.

Beside the steps a woman stood, alone. He could not see her face ; the sunset made a glory round her form. She might have been a spirit from old Venice that was come in answer to his question. For she raised her arms. Yes, she had raised her arms in answer, and so stood motionless, looking across the water.

Then the ship turned away and passed behind the Church of the Salute, and the sunset faded in the sky.

CHAPTER II

Two men sat dining at a restaurant in Venice. The place was gay with lights and people. There was the constant hum of voices, the sense of the presence of men and women—gay, expansive, free—the odour of meat, of wine, of flowers, of humanity. They dined for the most part in silence, looking on the scene. Sometimes one made a short remark, to which the other smiled or nodded. They watched their neighbours with amusement. They waited for the time to talk, when the more serious business of dinner was over. They came at last to figs and grapes, and one remarked, looking across the table :

‘Have we not met before?’

The other shook his head. ‘I, too, have been thinking so. When you came into the cabin at Trieste, and said you were my cabin companion, I thought I recognised you. I was almost sure. But I cannot remember where.’

‘Nor I. And yet you seem familiar. You talk, you laugh like some one I have known. I know not where nor when. I do not feel you are a stranger.’

‘No! And yet where was it?’

‘I cannot think. It does not seem that we have met. You have not travelled in any steamer I have gone by, nor have we been in the same station.’

‘No, it seems not. I thought your name might be a help, but it is not. The name Captain Warden awakes no memory.’

‘Nor does Holt to me.’

‘Have we, then, doubles? Maybe we met in some existence before this.’

They laughed. The question seemed insoluble. Why trouble, then, to find the answer?

‘We shall remember it sometime. Meanwhile,’ said Holt, ‘let us suppose the answer given. We have met, no matter where. We know each other; even if not true of the past, it will be of the future. We have a month in the same cabin.’

‘If, then, there is no past,’ said Warden, ‘though I am sure there is—if, then, there is no past, let us anticipate the future. We shall be

friends, therefore we are, and have been. Time can be read from either end.'

They laughed again. Whatever the past had held or the future might contain, the present made them friends. They felt it. That which we feel requires no proof.

'Then you will come with me and see my friends,' said Warden. 'They are at an hotel close by.'

For answer Holt rose up. They left the restaurant and walked along the Grand Canal.

The terrace where they sat at coffee gave on the Grand Canal, and it was half in shadow. There were no lamps upon it save at one end, beside the stairs where the gondolas were rocking. But from out the *salon* doors there came two floods of light that made broad pools of brilliance on the marble flags. Between these lakes of light and at the farther end were shallows of half-dark, where things and people were but indistinctly seen, and in the shadow, close to the balustrade, were Warden's friends. They were a Major and Mrs. Holman. There was a girl who sat with them, but she was half withdrawn, leaning upon the balustrade and gazing at the water. She hardly moved when the

men were introduced, and when they had sat down, Warden by Holman, Holt by Mrs. Holman, she returned again to her watching of the Grand Canal.

‘We saw you come,’ said Mrs. Holman; ‘we were returning from the steamer office in the colonnade, and saw the ship come in.’

‘You should have been with us,’ he answered; ‘we saw the city under the sunset, you saw but an ugly steamer. We had the best of it. That is the way to come to Venice, not by the bridge and station, her back door, but by the sea, her ancient highway, to which she turns her face. Only so can you understand what Venice was—and is. She is a city of a dream.’

‘And you were a monster coming into that dream—a nightmare with your straight black sides and ugly bows that broke the waters. The gondolas and fishing-boats fled from before you; and even when you had gone you left your stain upon the sky, your trouble in the water.’

‘You were not glad to see us?’

‘No. We have been here a whole enchanted week, and now you come to break the spell, to end our pleasure. The ship will carry us away to-morrow.’

‘Yes,’ he said. ‘Yes, our dreams have all awakenings. But the awakening is not yet. We have still a night and day of Venice and of Europe. And to-night there is a serenade.’

‘Why is the serenade?’

‘For us.’

‘For us? But why for us? What have we done that Venice should be glad to see us and serenade us?’

‘She serenades the arrival of the ship, and as it is the ship we shall go in, it is our ship, and therefore we may take ourselves some little of the honour.’

‘And all the pleasure. But why should Venice be glad to see this ship? She is not great nor new, nor even an Italian ship. Why does she give a serenade?’

‘Let us recall,’ he said, ‘the history of Venice and you will understand. She was a sea city, born from out the foam like Aphrodite. The murmur of its waters were her cradle-song. Its tides ran in her streets, its salt was in her blood. She turned her back towards the land and faced out seawards, for from there came all her strength and glory. Her Doges went each year to wed the ocean. They placed a ring upon her finger, and made of

the unstable wave a faithful mistress. Over the water-roads the sons of Venice sailed to wealth and glory, and they brought back to their city all they found. They took her fame to every shore, they made the East her own. She was the mistress of the sea.

‘But that is long ago. Venice is grown old and weak, her glory has departed. She sits beside the sea, but no one comes out of the sunrise to her. She has no lovers any more. She is forgotten, and the sea knows other masters that have been born in later days. No galleons come to anchor in her harbour, and her water-streets are empty. She is old and poor, and men recall only the memory of what she was.’

‘Poor Venice,’ said Mrs. Holman. ‘Poor Venice, to be old and poor and yet a woman.’

‘Now suddenly she thinks she feels a new blood stirring in her. She hopes once more to send her name into the world, to say, “I only slept, and am not dead.” Her sons know not the sea. In these later days she has wedded with the land, has made an iron fetter to bind her to the earth, she a sea city. So she must ask a stranger to come and help her, a neighbour to do that which her merchant princes once excelled the world in.

This is the beginning. The ships are not Venetian ; they do not sail from here, but only call in passing to and fro.

‘Still it is a beginning, and it may grow to much she hopes. She will be once more in touch with the world, she will reawaken her memory in those who had forgotten her. Is there a resurrection ? She hopes there may be.’

‘It is pathetic,’ said Mrs. Holman, ‘as if some beauty of a former world were again to deck herself with jewels and come forth to dance and sing, and hope that her lovers would return to her. But her old lovers are themselves all dead, and the newcomers know not Venice.’

‘Except by name as a treasure-house of art, a city on the sea, which once was great but whose life is passed away.’

They were both silent, and from far away upon the water there came the sound of music. The stream of gondolas that passed was gay with coloured lanterns hung about the prows, and there were strings of light like jewels on the buildings. The festival was beginning.

‘In any case,’ he said, ‘we benefit. We have the serenade.’

‘We have our benefit, too, in other ways,’ she

answered. 'The steamer will never seem to me quite the same. It gives her a romance that she is a messenger from Venice.'

'A Cupid or a modern Ganymede asking for loves renewed, or for new loves in place of those grown old or dead? No, nowadays no one asks for love but only money, and that is all she goes to seek. Venice to-day wants only money, not heroism, glory, love, or immortality. We are a worthy messenger.'

'Yet it gives a colour to our voyage.'

'In the days that were,' he said, 'the galleons went to seek adventure. They cruised into new seas, they found new lands and peoples. Who knew what Fate might bring you to? But now everything is commonplace, we know the seas, the coasts, the lands, and we can count the days and hours. There is nothing for us to find.'

'No Islands of Desire?'

'No Islands of Desire,' he said 'They sank beneath the waves a hundred years ago. We shall never see them more.'

He thought that Mrs. Holman smiled. It may have been a passing light that threw reflection on her.

'Amitiè!'

The girl behind her moved and answered.

‘Shall we go in gondolas and hear the serenade, and see how Venice looks at night in all her jewels?’ She waited for no answer, but called to Holman.

‘Order us gondolas,’ she said. ‘Two gondolas. One shall take you and me and Captain Warden, one shall take Amitiè and Mr. Holt. Tell her of Venice,’ she said to Holt. ‘You know it well, I think.’

He turned and tried to see across the dusk this girl who was to be his companion, but she had turned again to watch the scene.

‘You shall tell her of Venice. She shall tell you——’

‘Of what?’ he asked; ‘of something I am sure I shall be glad to know.’

The girl was looking at him with a slight surprise. But Mrs. Holman did not answer. She led the way down to the stairs, and a minute later the girl and man were in a gondola. The gondolier leant upon his oar, and the boat shot from out the still eddy into the moving stream of boats. Her bows were turned to the Rialto, and they were alone.

CHAPTER III

THE night was full of magic. Overhead the stars were strewn like diamond dust upon a deep blue robe, and Venice wore all her jewels. They were hung in stars and crosses, ropes and festoons of many-coloured light upon her palaces, the Lido gleamed like some constellation of the sea, and on the Grand Canal the ever-moving lights were like a necklace laid upon her bosom. They moved and trembled as if with her low breathing.

The air was full of music. There were bands that played, and voices of men and women singing, all unseen; their melody became one with the night; its notes, low-toned and sweet, passed softly on the water. The voices of the people in the gondolas made a continuous murmur, and the sea-wind sighed accompaniment. And underneath there was a stillness yet more clearly heard because unhearable. In other cities there is always an undertone of sound, of horses beating on the

stones, of rattling carriages, the harsh tramp of feet that tread and never rest. There is the murmur of the human sea that never wholly sleeps, there is an echo of unrest that always fills their streets.

6/ But here in Venice there is silence, only broken by the straining of an oar upon a rowlock or the splash of water on the piles. And rippling on that silence, like a laugh on a still sea, there is an all-pervading melody, so faint, so sweet it touches on the heart. It draws it to be one with all the magic of the city and the night. In Venice you can sit and dream.

And so they sat and dreamt, forgetful for a while. She must have made some sound or moved, for suddenly he came back from his dream and he remembered. He turned and looked at her.

But in the gloom he could not see her. There was against the dark the blur of a white dress beside him, and by the light of lamps that passed in other boats he caught sometimes the gleam of cheek or hair, a sudden outline and no more, so quickly gone he scarce could seize it. She sat quite silently, and looked out before her. She might have been alone, so little did his presence trouble her. Yet she was close to him, her dress

touched his, her shoulder was so near the least movement would have placed it next to his, her arms were crossed upon her lap.

He wished that he could see her, and the wish with wishing grew the stronger. He desired to touch and break the charm that held her, but dared not. And he felt from her an influence that stirred his blood.

Most women are so self-contained, most women are so cold that you can sit by them and hardly realise a woman is beside you. They give nothing, and they ask for nothing. But there are others who send out some unseen influence that moves into your blood and makes it quicker, hotter, redder, and throws a mist into your brain. They give, they ask, but what they give and take I know not except trouble. They give you fear and make you tremble. They draw from out you life and strength. You would escape, but cannot. They claim you, so that in answer and defence you wish to claim them, to put your arms about them.

In the charmed night the magic grew. A perfume from her hair drifted across his face. Do women ever realise the things they do to men, and what men suffer? You do not put a starving man beside a ripening fruit. When men had blood

within their veins the world was wary. Now they have water, and——

A jolt. A gondola that came from out a side canal surged up against them. The gondoliers cried one to the other. Then they moved on again.

‘Do you know Venice?’

The words came from him half-unconsciously, almost a cry, so sharp they seemed across the silence.

‘No, never.’

‘I have been here before, but never long, only enough to wish for more. It is a place that grows into one’s consciousness, that gives to life a meaning it has not held before. I do not know which is better, the first charm of strangeness and of beauty or the love which grows with knowledge.’

‘Could you not tire of Venice?’

‘Never, if once you loved her, for she is of infinite variety. She lived a life that had a colour and a meaning which is never-ending. The more you understand, the more you find there is to understand. You rise from height to height. And there are always heights beyond, new summits that are never summits, but only steps.’

‘I think also I should not tire of it.’

‘That is because you love it too, and so have the key to knowledge. We can never know

enough of that which touches us. We only tire of things we do not care for.'

'Do not you think we learn to know things first and like them afterwards?'

He shook his head. 'I do not think so. No. Knowledge is not the key to everything, certainly not to love. But love is the key to knowledge, the only key. You feel, and then you understand. You feel the charm of Venice, and you learn to understand her, little by little. You can never tire. We only tire of anything when we have reached its end. A mystery solved, a flower plucked, a reward won is worthless and forgotten. That can never be with Venice. She never gives herself entirely, she hides always deeper things to learn. She never shows her beauty wholly, but she keeps behind her veil new beauties. Yet she is not strange in that.'

'In what way do you mean?'

'I mean that everything of beauty is the same. Do you remember what Keats said?

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,
Its loveliness increases, it will never
Pass into nothingness, but still will keep
A bower quiet for us and a sleep,
Full of sweet dreams and health and quiet breathing.

No, it is true of everything whose beauty strikes us.'

The girl listened, and he saw by a light that passed that she looked up a moment to him. He would have caught that glance but for the dark that came again and hid it. Then she turned her eyes away again.

'Tell me some more,' she said, 'of Venice.'

'There is so little I can tell you. I only admire; I have not yet begun to know. If I were an artist I could talk of her art, her pictures; if I were an historian, of her past great deeds; if I were a poet, of her romance. But I am none of these. And indeed to me Venice is more than all these things.'

'How more?'

He might have answered that Venice is as a woman is to him who loves her, more than her hair, her eyes, her skin, her jewels, than her kisses even. But he was silent. There are things to say, and there are things to feel and never say. Never to say? There are times to speak, times to be silent. There are temples where the tongue is tied and there are groves and places sacred to Diana. We must all pass through these. Then we may come to other greater temples far beyond, where tongue

and thought is free. But they are hidden in labyrinths, and no man reaches them alone.

They came to the Rialto and then turned. Before them lay a river of bright lights that moved and trembled.

‘Tell me some more,’ she said.

‘She held a secret.’

‘What secret?’

‘She knew how to be young and strong, to live and love and die as no one lives or loves or dies to-day. She saw in life a something that it lacks to-day, something that made it worth the living. She saw things worth the dying for.’

‘And to-day?’

‘Consider. What are our lives to-day? We are become, not living things, but parts of a great world machine. We live no longer, but we turn for ever on the wheels of law and rule. We neither love, nor fear, nor hope, nor hate. We can count our days and years and all the emptiness that fills them. We think that we have conquered nature, but nature has conquered us, made us machines and attendants on machines. We have subdued chance only to learn that chance makes all the value of our lives. We banish fear and find that hope has gone with her, for they are

sisters who are never parted. We live much longer, but within our years we have much less of life. We put off death, and fear him more for all his distance. We are much richer, yet feel always poor. We strive for ever to gain—nothing. The secret of life is to know how to live. What is that secret?’

‘They knew it?’

‘Surely they knew it. Look.’

On either side of them were palaces, upon their right the Church of the Salute, and before them rose the Ducal Palace.

‘Men who built like that felt differently from what we do, they regarded life and nature from another standpoint. They worked, not to make money, but because they loved the work and put their soul into it. They lived, not because it was a habit and they were afraid to die, but because life was good. They drank it like a wine that made them strong. Life was a march, a triumph, that moved to stirring music. It was a dance, sometimes a *danse macabre*, always a dance. It was so with all the world then. You see its tokens everywhere. They call that time “the Renaissance.” It was indeed a new birth. The world grows old and dies and then is born again,

over and over again. That was its latest youth, its latest love, and we now live in an old age.'

He wondered why he talked. It seemed she had in her a charm that brought his thoughts to words. He spoke not for her but for himself. She listened.

'And more,' he said, 'yet more.'

'What more could there be,' she asked, 'than life?'

'Something beyond life. They saw or thought they saw something we do not see to-day. They lived not only for the day, but for the morrow, for the great To-morrow.'

'You mean they were religious, and we have irreligion now?'

'Yes, they were religious. They put into the creeds and forms of which their faith was shaped a reality of life. They felt and understood something we do not know, something that can never be expressed, that is like life and makes the dead to live. It comes not from the faith itself but from the believers in that faith. If now to-day we have no living faith, it is our fault. If we had spiritual life within us we should soon make a form of faith to manifest it in. The fault is ours. They had a hope.'

‘What was that hope?’

‘I do not know. How can I tell? I have it not. No one has seen it nowadays.’

‘Did they not attain it?’

‘They could not have done so.’

‘Why not?’

‘Because anything once fully obtained is no longer valuable. They never reached it, but they saw it far off and ran towards it, confident that sometime they would do so.’

‘Yet they failed?’

‘Perhaps they did not fail,’ he said. ‘It may have been something far away. They may have reached it, but we can never know.’

‘How far?’

‘Beyond the river, on the other side.’

‘Beyond death?’

‘Yes, on the other side of death. They saw that other side maybe. We do not.’

‘You make me sad,’ she answered, ‘as music does that tells of things we never understand.’

As if in answer to her words a music came from some who sang on board a boat that passed. They stopped to listen. The singers sang the songs of Italy, those songs that come from beauty felt and seen, which seeks expression to another

sense. These songs are gay, gay as the sunshine on the vines, the ripple of the streams, the laugh of children going home; these songs are sad, as passion that has burnt and passed, as skies that are so hard they cannot weep, as graves beneath the vines. They haunt the memory with their echo, and their sweetness lives embalmed in sadness. The waters lapped a low accompaniment. The singers ceased, and they passed on again.

They passed, but not the same. For in that music there had come communion to them. The veil the darkness hung dividing them had broken. A sight that was not of the eyes showed each to other, and they had touched in some strange sympathy. He felt that he returned to her something of the trouble she had given to him, that she held something that was his, some of his thought had passed into her life as he felt in his veins a warmth that came from her.

‘Tell me,’ he said, ‘this afternoon why did you answer?’

She made a little movement of surprise, her hand touched his and was withdrawn.

‘I do not know,’ she answered vaguely. ‘I saw you, what you did. I answered. I did it

without thinking, by some impulse. How should I know why I was made to answer ?'

She turned from him and dropped her fingers in the water. 'Can you not tell ?' she asked.

'How should I know ?' he answered.

'Because I answered you, because *you* made me.'

Far away the singers sang again.

CHAPTER IV

THEY landed at the steps before Saint Mark's, where Warden and the Holmans waited for them, and walked together to the square.

There were many people there. They passed in a continuous stream across the front before the Ducal Palace, they filed along beside the brilliant shops, they stood in rings to hear the music. One band was playing between the palace and the colonnade; the other, the great orchestra of Venice, was in the square. The campanile was between them, and when one played the other rested. The people passed from one to other, or sat at little tables that the cafés placed in rows, reaching far into the piazza. All the place was gay with light and colour, all the people moved and laughed as if the beauty of the night had touched them. The music passed into their blood; they walked as if their spirits danced, and their feet would fain keep measure. Their footsteps

on the marble flags made a continuous murmur, slow and pleasant, quite unlike the purposed tread of business cities. The rustle of the dresses and the low voices blended with it into an undertone on which the music rode triumphant. The whole piazza was in flood with sound and light that filled it to its rim.

They came to Florian's and sat down. Holt looked to see what like were those with whom already he had talked in darkness or half-dark.

There are some who say that soul and body are two things, the soul a tenant in a house made ready for it. Therefore they say you cannot tell the one by knowing of the other. They are two things distinct, bound in a strict partnership that may be pleasant or may be sometimes an internecine war.

And there are others who declare that soul and body are one thing, you cannot have the one without the other. There is, in fact, no soul; that which we call such is but a function of the body, and therefore, if you know one, you know the other all in all, for they are one.

And there are other theories. None can be true, and yet there may be truth in all.

There is a truth in this, that from some faces

and some forms experience teaches us to expect certain ideas and thoughts, and so instinctively our estimates of persons are first made by what we see. And though in time we modify that estimate, it still remains a dominant factor in our minds. If so, the converse must be true, that certain tones of voice, of thought, lead us to look for their expression in the face and form. What like to Holt were Holman, Mrs. Holman, and Miss Ormond? Though he had scarcely seen them, yet their words, their thoughts, their unseen presence had built within his brain unconsciously a form wherein to occupy. All through the darkness it had grown, now in the light he looked to see if it were true. What was the vision of the Holmans? What was the truth?

A woman of whom the first word and the last would be, 'She is a woman.' She was not beautiful nor plain; she was not tall nor short, nor thin nor stout. Her hair was fair, her eyes were blue.

She was a woman, and you felt when you were with her that she claimed no more, nor was there more that any one could claim. She was a woman, and was proud of it. She was a wife, and she was happy in being so. She was a mother, and her glory in her two little sons had no words to express

it. All these things were instinct in her. You understood from the beginning, and you forgot them never. She claimed from you all that a woman claims from all men—deference, kindness, tenderness, protection, if need be. And she would give you in return all that she could. Her mind perhaps contained little of the past, but she saw and felt the present with instinctive truth. She was so simple and she was so complete, that voice or thought or sight said always the same thing.

And as she was amongst women, so was he amongst men—a *man*.

Of the two there was this, that once seen together you never afterwards thought of one without the other. They were complete together, and apart each lacked a something that the other gave. They were two sides of life—the man and woman that make up a whole.

They were a book to read, a play to watch, a harmony to hear. Life was good to them, and as they received so did they give again.

What of the girl?

When in the darkness he had sat beside her he had thought of her indistinctly. No one can describe that which is as yet a possibility only. A picture not yet painted, a poem not yet written, a

Galatea shut within her marble waiting for her creator, a sleeping Beauty waiting for the Prince. Such is every girl to every unmarried man. They hold within them greater or lesser possibilities of life and passion, but they *are* nothing. Innocence and purity are negative ; beauty requires an awakened soul to light it.

Fair hair with gleams of red and gold ; still eyes like pools—those eyes that take and do not give ; and for the rest—a girl, that which some day will be a woman. Such did he see, a girl such as Venice might have known four centuries ago. ‘Surely she comes from the far past,’ he thought.

The band was playing ; it was a march they played, and the strong music rang and echoed, beating against the palaces and church in waves of martial sound. It made the blood run faster and the heart beat quicker, it brought into the mind memories of many things, it woke desires and instincts dormant.

‘But it wants men,’ said Warden ; ‘it wants the beat of soldiers marching, that is what makes its purpose. A march is music to which men move.’

‘And at the end a battle ?’ asked Mrs. Holman.

‘Yes, at the end,’ said Warden. ‘In the old days the music went into the fight, but not so now.’

‘We have made war,’ said Holman, ‘a matter of pure business. We have sacrificed everything to what we call efficiency. That is our mistake.’

‘Is it not business?’ asked Holt.

Holman shook his head. ‘It is a passion, like all other forces that make or purify the world. In the end the victory lies not in the coat, the gun, the organism, but in the soldier’s heart. The nation that first learns how to bring back the music to the battle-line will sweep the world. There is nothing to beat a charge or stem a rout like music. We knew, but have forgotten. We think men are machines; they are not.’

Warden nodded. ‘I have seen a bagpipe make men go where no one would have thought that it was possible. War is an art and not a business; the greatest leaders are they who know this.’

The band was playing again, this time a waltz. There was a sadness in its melody, the languor of a dream. It drew the strength from out the heart. The tendrils of the music bound the thoughts in warmth and drowsiness. It had in it a hint of death.

All music is a march, a dance, a requiem, or

between them. All life is love or war, and ends in death. Love builds a world, but love grows old and tired, and all it built grows grey. Then war destroys it, and makes place for a new love to build new worlds. And so the world goes on from love to death, and so to a new life and higher. The sweetest music is saddest; the least sad is that which drives to war. That is a truth of life.

They rose and walked down to the Grand Canal, strolling along, crossing the bridge, and going north. The people stood in ranks beside the water watching the fireworks on the Lido. When they ceased the crowd moved on again.

‘I wish,’ said Mrs. Holman, ‘that this night would last for years. I love the stillness of the water, the music that floats on it, the dark, the stars, the crowd which is so happy. There are in the world many places beautiful, yet there is but one Venice. What is its charm? Venice is dead. Its life is no different now from that of any place.’

‘Venice is dead,’ he murmured, ‘yet the perfume of the life that once was here hangs round it. The jar that held the roses breaks and empties, but their odour still remains for those who love

it. The sea-shell holds for ever in its heart the music of the waves.'

'And perhaps,' she answered, 'Venice is less changed than other cities, and preserves her beauty. Neither is she so very old. Athens is dead and turned to dust, and Rome is all in ruins. Other places have assumed the garments of modernity, which is the same for all. But Venice is not so changed. Perhaps Othello, Portia, Desdemona would know and recognise it could they see it again.'

They came back to the square. The crowd had lessened. In turning past the campanile they met an Indian girl, a fellow-passenger. She wore a dress wherein the East and West were blended in some subtle fashion. A gold-embroidered saree made of Indian silk clung to her closely, as it clings to the bare arms and shoulders of her Eastern sisters. It hung in the same folds. Her hair was done in Eastern fashion, that is near the classic. She held herself with dignity and grace. She had the ease and repose the West has quite forgotten. Somehow she was in keeping with the city. Its architecture has some of the Eastern colour. It had a soul half-Oriental, and its dress, like hers, was half of the East. She might have

landed from some galleon anchored now within the roads, or been the harem slave of some great noble brought from Morocco or Constantinople.

They watched her pass with pleasure, yet she cast a silence over them.

For she brought to them remembrance of the East from which she came, to which they must return. The East, the East ! We love it when we go there first, and hope to win affection in return. We never do. The East is afraid of us. We capture her ; but you may take by force a body, not a soul—that can be given only. She holds her heart away from us, and gives us but her passion. She is at most a mistress, not a wife. Her suns beat on us cruelly, her hot winds burn like barren kisses, her warm breath brings us languor, and unless we flee they bring us death. So, gradually, our love becomes a fear that grows. We dread her, and we hate the chain that draws us back. Our hearts are ever in the West, whose breath is cool, whose eyes and skies are grey and sometimes dimmed with tears, her kisses fragrant with the dew of dawn.

They stopped and watched the daughter of the Orient till she disappeared among the people.

‘She has her beauty,’ Mrs. Holman said, ‘and

yet I wish we had not seen her. She has broken into our pleasure, and so ended it.'

Warden turned round. 'Let us forget again,' he said.

'It is too late. The charm is broken. I remember that to-morrow we must sail,' said Mrs. Holman. 'Our last evening in the West is ended. Let us go now. Please tell my husband and Miss Ormond.'

Holt and Mrs. Holman waited by the campanile, while Warden followed the others to call them back. Both were silent. It seemed the prose of life had come into their pleasure.

'I have not asked you,' said Mrs. Holman suddenly, 'how did you like my cousin? Did you tell her about Venice?'

'Yes, what I could.'

'And she ; what did she tell you?'

'Nothing.'

'Perhaps you did not ask. You know with us women it is so ; we must be questioned. You must take, we do not give.'

'I asked a question, but she could not answer.'

'Some questions have no answers.'

'I think this had one ; but she did not know it, nor do I.'

Mrs. Holman looked at him and laughed.

‘Time only has the answer to all questions.’

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Venice was still and dark. Her jewels had gone out. She remembered she was old.

A half-dead moon rose from the sea and looked upon the sleeping city. Its faint far light silvered her marbles and made mysteries in her streets. Her quick fever over, Venice was herself again, her still white shape stretched by the ebon water.

The present gone, the past awoke.

Within the shell the sounds of long ago were born again. There echoed in her ways the passions of dead centuries. The love, the hate, the lust of life and death, the hot, strong tides that built her, beat like a distant surge upon a phantom coast. Her shadows moved. Lover, conspirator, assassin, statesman, women with hair that shone like sun-born haloes, loitered and whispered. To the night silences the lapping waters spoke, and the pale moon climbed the skies.

CHAPTER V

AT dawn a shower had passed, borne from the mountains to the sea, and Venice sparkled fresh from her morning bath. To the Rialto market came the boats laden with fruit, with vegetables, with birds on strings, with summer flowers that lingered yet in secret places. Why did Horace tell us to give up searching for late roses? They and the first spring blossoms are the best of all.

There must be little change now from the time when Shylock came here to inquire the news of Antonio's ships. The canals, the narrow ways, the houses are not much altered. There was a bridge, as there is now, across the Grand Canal. True, it was wooden then, and now is marble; the change is not so great. Had it been steel, there were a change indeed.

And the marble is not new: it is old, and scratched upon its stubborn hardness there are many names; leaning upon its balustrade Holt

read a number of them. A few were names of men, but most were women's names.

One was cut deep and made impression on the hand that rested on it.

'Bianca,' and the date near fifty years ago. Where is Bianca now, and where the man who left her name here? Probably both are dead. If they are dead, what did they leave behind them? Does their love inherit still the world in children, or have they passed into forgetfulness and left only what the marble keeps here for a time?

Men live and work and cut the names of women upon the world. The greatest tomb the world has known is not of emperor or of conqueror, of philosopher or statesman. It is but of a woman. It was not built to commemorate a victory, a glory, to honour knowledge, wisdom, art, or thought of men, but to a passion—love. The greatest faiths that built the greatest temples are the faiths of women. Men build these temples, and preserve the faiths for which they give their lives.

Men cut the names of women on the world and on their hearts. What in return do women give us?

The waters down below the bridge were still and dark. He could not see into them, they but give back reflection of the bridge, the sky, himself.

In the piazza the pigeons preened and strutted. Hardly would they move to let the passers-by go on their way. They fluttered round a girl who fed them, perching on her hands and shoulders, and would not be shaken off.

Holt went into the Ducal Palace and crossed the Bridge of Sighs. A tourist party were before him, and he waited till they went on. And then he went into the windowless stone cave that was the room of torture and of death. It was quite dark and still. The lamp of the guide had disappeared, descending with his party; the voices had died away. The silence of the thick stone walls closed round him; he seemed alone in all the world.

He lit a match and looked about him. He tried to realise what it was that these stones had seen and heard—the blood that had poured upon this floor, the cries that had beaten unavailingly and found no exit. No one could see save those who came to torture and to kill; no one but they could hear. There was no help anywhere.

The red light of the match tinged the walls as if with blood, and it went out. Darkness returned. In the dead silence he could almost hear the walls give forth again that which they had heard, which had sunk into their hardness—the sobs, the shrieks, the blasphemies, the prayers, the moans, that died away in silence.

He felt his heart was beating faster. There was a singing in his ears, a redness in his eyes. His nostrils sniffed the acrid scent of blood. For a moment he became terribly afraid. He had an impulse to escape, to run to some place where the sun was shining and the free wind blew. He forced the impulse under. He wished to understand. For this, too, was part of the life that Venice had lived, a shadow in that abounding light. How many hundred bodies had suffered in agony where he stood? How many hundred souls had escaped at length through stone and door and gone into the unknown? They had suffered for their own sins, for the sins of others; a suffering given in punishment, in revenge, in lust of the pain of others.

The lust of life is the lust of death, the lust of pleasure needs its counterpart in the lust of pain, of beauty in horror, of hope and gladness in

despair. Life is always balanced. If the pendulum swings far one way, it will swing far the other.

He was sure that a key to understand all the art and beauty of that great city and the life that made it lay in this death-chamber, one key of the many that opened the hundred locks of the gates of understanding. Pleasure and pain are complementary one to the other. One could not have existed without the other. You must pay its price for life—in death, a great price. And presently the horror and disgust somewhat passed away, and he began to wonder whether the price was in fact so great. The fear of death is greatly fictitious and greatly modern. It exists for the most part in the imagination. Acquaintance with death does not increase the fear, but decreases it. When men are first in battle, and see wounds and death, they are horrified and sickened ; but by degrees, by quick degrees, the feeling wears away. It is not that men become callous or hardened, but that they learn to estimate these things at their proper worth. The more men see of wounds and death, the less they think them to be feared. After all, the capability of the body to suffer is limited, far more limited than those who have not suffered it

think. Most men have passed it some time or another, and become insensible from pain. No one tortured in that cell could have felt more, because there was no more to feel. Nature is very merciful, and we never know her mercy till we need it. And death itself ; the horror of death lies in the fear of it ; the more you know of it, the less you fear it.

In old Venice death and suffering were always near ; there was the sword of the public and the private enemy, the dagger of the secret assassin, the poisoned cup, the torture chamber ; there was disease against which science had no help. From youth up they looked on pain and death and feared them not, but found in them a relish to life, a spur, an incentive to take all that life could give you, to drink the cup to the lees and laugh.

Life was hot and strong and passionate. Those who could not face its swirling tides became priests or monks, and went into the eddies of life. They lived their lives of quietness apart. They did not try to persuade all the world to peace because they were afraid of war ; they did not seek to stagnate all a nation's blood to keep time with their own. Life was then of extremes, of hill and valley, of hate and love, of fear and hope, and not an

uniformity of nothing, a dead plain whereon continuous shallow pools of sentiment make the ways sloppy.

Therefore was such a prison, such a torture chamber possible in the great city. It did not strike imagination then as it did now. It was the inevitable shadow of a strong life that burned with brilliance.

And now we remember Venice for her loves, and not her hates ; for her virtues, not her sins. They are forgotten. Much is forgiven her because she loved much.

But nowadays our life burns dimly. We are old men who fear death more than young men. We are so afraid that we go about and pray for universal peace ; we say that in the whole existence there is nothing worth fighting for, nothing worth suffering for. Put up with everything and still live on ; we call it by high names, humanity, morality, altruism, so to excuse our slowness of the blood. We try to reduce everything to commonplace, and life to universal formulæ. In vain, in vain. The only Absolute we know is Nothing. Death and life are one.

Yet he was glad to leave it, glad to cross the bridge again and come before the art that glows

from wall and ceiling in the palace. Its form and colour came from life at its highest. The painters mixed their paints with blood. Without it no great thing in the world has been achieved. Great nations, cities, families, great laws, great arts, great science have risen from seas of blood, like souls above it. We write our names upon the world in blood and not in ink or water. It is fire that lights the world, fire struck from the hearts of men.

What strikes this fire?

He stepped out of the Council chamber to the balcony that gives upon the harbour. Standing there he found Miss Ormond.

CHAPTER VI

‘You have come,’ he said, ‘to say good-bye to Venice? You are alone?’ She turned round suddenly, surprised that he should be there.

‘They are looking at pictures, Mrs. Holman and Captain Warden.’

‘And you? You do not care for pictures?’

‘My eyes get tired,’ she answered; ‘all pictures have the same distance.’

‘And so the eye gets tired?’

‘I want a change—to look at things far off, to look at nothing. That is a rest.’

‘The sea and sky,’ he answered, ‘where our sight can travel on and on; to see nothing, and therefore to see more; just as our arms get tired with holding, so we stretch them forth to nothing.’

‘And hold the more. A thing or many things are finite; there are but two infinities—everything and nothing; they are the same.’

She looked at him in doubt. 'But there must be a foreground to the sea and sky. There are the boats, the waves, the tide.'

'So there must be a foreground to eternity, the present. Everything that we see and know is but a foreground, and the distance gives it scale. I have heard it said a picture should have in it always somewhere a hint of distance. In an interior a window should be open or a door, or there should be a beam of light, so that the eye and thought will not forget all that there is beyond.'

She did not answer. They went inside to the great Council chamber, but it was empty, so they set to walk through the other rooms looking for Mrs. Holman, but they did not find her. The great bare figures of the frescoes seemed almost living. They stared, they moved.

'You do not care for art?' he asked.

She stopped and looked him in the face, and dropped her eyes. Then she moved on again.

'I ask you questions, but you do not answer.'

'You ask me questions and I do not answer, because your questions are not questions.'

'What are they?'

'They are assertions. You do not ask because

you want to know, but because you want me to know something.'

'How do you mean? If I do so it is not consciously.'

'You asked me why I answered you when you sailed in; you knew I did not know, you knew I could not tell you. You only asked because you wished me to remember I had done so and to wonder why, to keep on thinking of it. You ask me if I care for art. You mean that you are sure I do not, and want me to understand that you have seen it.'

'I did not mean it so.'

'No; but like me, like all of us, you also say and do things you do not know the reason of.'

'Of course; I live, for instance, but I have no idea why, nor for what end, nor whether life has any meaning.'

'I have been asked,' she said impatiently, 'a hundred times if I cared for art, and I have answered Yes. I have believed yes. I like light and colour, form and line.'

'Are they not art?'

'Until yesterday, until to-day I should have said Yes. Now I begin to think art is far more than that.'

‘What more?’

She stopped again and looked at him angrily and yet with a hidden supplication in her eyes.

‘If you are clever why should you wish to make me feel a fool and ignorant? Does it give you pleasure?’

It was his turn to be silent. What had he said or done, to make her turn on him like this? How had he vexed her? and as for ignorance, it was he who felt the ignorance.

‘I am very sorry,’ he replied; ‘I did not mean it. You think I am a prig; it is not true. I do not think I know things. It is the other way. I know my ignorance too well. I look and try to learn. I asked because I wished to know.’

‘And I am sorry,’ she said, ‘for I know that what you say is true. You have not wished to humble me, yet you have done it.’

‘And you have me,’ he answered. ‘Yesterday perhaps I should have said I knew a little; now I am sure it is not so. That is your doing; you have done to me as I to you.’

She looked at him as if she thought he was defending himself by echoing her accusation.

And yet he knew that it was true. He had been content before with what he knew of life

and art—little enough, picked up from books and people. He had not troubled himself about either. Art was but an addition to the pleasures and the ornaments of life, and life itself was simple enough to be taken as it came. Yet now it seemed to him that both had meanings, and that they should be known ; that art and life were not two things but one, or, rather, art was part of life, a facet of it. Therefore he tried to know more of the one and other.

Life had so many sides ; men were part of life and women. To understand art or life completely one must see it from both their standpoints. What was a woman's standpoint ? What did this girl think of these pictures ? He asked her because he wished to know.

Yet how could she answer ?

It must all look so very different from their side. To take one thing alone. She did not look at the nude pictures, but passed them by ; and yet to men they are, perhaps, the most beautiful side of art. Because man loves woman all in all ; he glorifies her ; there is in her for him nothing common or unclean. She thrills his pulses with a romance born of the earth that rises towards heaven.

The artist draws her, with a passion that is like sunshine, which makes beautiful everything it touches. His passion gives her form meaning and poetry. He feels the spirit of immortality it holds for him. What he feels he puts into his picture, and all men see and feel it.

With woman it is different. How can she understand? When women paint women the passion is not there, and the picture does not live. When women see women painted they can only feel what they have within them. Therefore they do not care for such art, they are afraid of it. They wonder at men liking it, because they do not understand. They condemn us, perhaps, whereas it is their own deficiency. Man sees in every woman something of the goddess, and in return what do they give us?

Always the same question and no answer.

Is there ever an answer to the questions that we ask of life, of fate, of art, of women?

Where are the Sibylline books? Are they all burnt?

They suddenly came on Mrs. Holman and on Warden.

‘Where have you come from?’ they demanded.

Holt told them he had been down in the prison.

‘You look,’ said Warden, ‘as if you had seen a ghost.’

‘I tried to see some ghosts there,’ he answered ; ‘I called to them.’

‘So did Glendower. “I can call spirits from the vasty deep,” he said, to which Percy answered, “And so can I, and so can every man. But will they come when you do call ?”’

‘They did not come.’

‘Why did you wish to see them ?’ asked Mrs. Holman.

‘To ask them questions.’

‘Questions of the past ?’

‘No ! of the present.’

‘The answer to the present is in the future, not in the past,’ she said.

‘We should all have done better,’ said Warden, ‘had we gone out to the Lido, or made a trip to Murano, instead of spending all our morning in a picture gallery and palace. You have been ghost-seeking and failed ; Miss Ormond has tired her eyes.’

‘I have enjoyed myself,’ said Mrs. Holman.

‘You would enjoy anything, I believe,’ said Warden.

‘I care for art, or, rather, for some art, and you do not,’ she answered.

‘I don’t,’ said Warden. ‘Frankly I don’t. I, like Miss Ormond, prefer the sea and sky and the fresh air.’

‘One may like them too,’ said Mrs. Holman, ‘and still like art.’

‘Perhaps. And any art that was as true as they are would please me too, I think. But Madonnas who look sad or simper, saints full of arrows, trees that bear dead men as fruit, imaginary resurrections, and the like, do not appeal to me.’

‘What would?’ asked Mrs. Holman. ‘What would you have had these Venetians paint if not what they did?’

Warden reflected. ‘I would have had them paint not holy Virgins, but the Venetian women, the gorgeous ladies of their day, the market women, the village maidens as they lived and loved. I would have had them paint not stupid legends like that of the fisherman’s ring, but pictures of the galleons going out to sea to fight, or sailing far away to unknown lands. I would have had them paint not tortured saints, but if they wanted blood and bones, then battle-

fields where men died worthily. Of all the glory of Venice how little is there in its art ?'

Mrs. Holman and the girl looked sympathy.

'I think,' said Holt, 'that you are wrong.'

'How wrong ? Do you mean to tell me you would not sooner have such pictures painted as these painters alone could paint, than all these acres of saints and other trumpery that they spent their genius on ? Don't you prefer a laughing girl to a Madonna, a man doing something and not merely suffering ?'

'Perhaps I would, even most people would to-day. But you forget that they painted not for us but for themselves, their times, their world.'

'Why did they want to paint such things ?' asked Mrs. Holman. 'What did their world see in them ?'

'Because,' he said, 'art is a complement to life. It makes it clearer, sounder ; it tells us truths that the present hides. Why should they wish to paint all that they did and not the scenes of ordinary life ? Because they *were* the common things of life. And art can never compete with reality. It cannot, and it should not.'

'Why not ?'

It cannot, because no pictured thing, no

written thing can ever equal life. It should not, for why attempt the impossible and the unnecessary? Art has its message different from ordinary life.'

'What is that message? To give us the unreal?' asked Warden.

'No, but to give us other meanings and other values of life besides those that are before us daily. The views of life are infinite. Art teaches us what we do not see daily and what we forget. None of us care to see paintings and read books of our own everyday life. Instinct tells us that is not what we want. The servant girl reads of duchesses, the duchess reads about the slums.'

'Yes, that is true,' said Mrs. Holman. 'I live in India, and I do not care to read the tales of Anglo-Indian life. I wish to read of what I do not know.'

And Warden, too, agreed. 'Stories of soldier life and pictures of it I do not care for, being myself a soldier. I did not think of that.'

'And you do not care for pictures of life to-day, however good they be. I wonder if many of the great works of ancient art we so admire to-day appeared so great to those who saw them

new. They may have gained by strangeness. Yes, the message of true art is to the day, not to the morrow.'

'Is it not of both?' asked Mrs. Holman. 'Is not the highest art for ever?'

He wondered if it were so, and if there were any 'for ever.' They walked down the great staircase to the square. Warden and Miss Ormond went on in front. Mrs. Holman asked—

'Are you an artist?'

'No.'

'A poet?'

'No.'

'But you would like to be?'

'I do not think so. Yet I would like to see as they do. It is not that they see more than other men, for they see less. But they see what others do not. It is the hidden things of life that come to them and the ordinary life that is hidden. They turn life's garment inside out. I would like to see all sides—their side, the world's side, religion's side, man's side and woman's—to have a glimpse of all of them.'

Mrs. Holman looked at him curiously.

'Do you think that any one can see all this at once? and if he could, would he not be

in danger of developing something of a mental squint?'

He laughed. 'Perhaps.'

The sunlight in the square lay like aerial gold that flowed and ebbed against it; the life that passed was dull and commonplace. It wanted the figures from the frescoes to come and live in it. Or is it that life requires interpretation? We see the paintings through the minds of those who painted them, we see life through our own. The dulness is in the seer.

Before them Warden and Miss Ormond walked and chatted. They were disputing merrily about a matter. At last they heard Warden say decisively—

'All men are poets naturally, no women are; and the proof is that we see a poem in things that you deem commonplace.'

'What things for instance?'

'A salmon mayonnaise, a good beef-steak, a tankard of cool beer.'

Miss Ormond laughed. 'So that is your poetry; material, all of the earth and earthy.'

'So are all real things,' he answered. 'You can grasp them and they do not fade.'

CHAPTER VII

AT noon the ship had come round from the docks and anchored in the Grand Canal, and when they went on board late in the afternoon, they met the Syndic and a party returning from her. There had been a lunch on board and speeches to wish well to the adventure. But in these days when everything has become a matter of machine-like regularity good wishes seem superfluous. There is so little one can wish for with any likelihood of realisation. For one wishes for the unusual and not the commonplace.

They watched their fellow-passengers come on board. A voyage is a strange thing. It is a space between two worlds of East and West, between two lives, that which we live at home, and that out there. It belongs to neither. It is a neutral time that does not link, but rather divides them, making the transition possible. And those we meet on board, for the most part have no place before or

after. They come into our lives when first they mount the gangway. For a month they may mean much or little to us. Some of them must mean much in that brief time, for in their power is much. The voyage may be pleasant or the reverse ; they have it in their power to make it either. You get to know them well in some ways, and in others not at all. There are many sides of character that a voyage never calls forth. Then when the ship arrives at its journey's end they go again into the unknown from which they sprang, they disappear. Yet perhaps not all of them. There may be one sometimes whose thread will get so firmly twisted into yours upon that voyage that it can never afterwards be separated quite.

They were a strange mixture that came up. Their appearance was dramatic. They rose as from the sea, their faces showing above the rail without a warning ; they stepped upon the deck ; and then they went below and others followed them.

They were not like the passengers of other ships on which Holt had travelled, going to and from the East. For these are usually all the same. Soldiers, civilians, merchants ; it is strange to see

how Indian life levels all differences that occupation impresses on the appearance, and has a clear stamp of its own. It overrides all differences.

But in this ship there was no sameness. There was no dominating nationality; English and German, Italian, Austrian, all were fairly numerous, and there were two Greeks, a Russian Jew, a Dane, Egyptians, and the Indian girl. The ship was a kaleidoscope of nationalities. Their occupations could not so easily be guessed. They were for time to show. Noticeable amongst them all were a company of nuns. Their ugly dresses and white coifs showed up beside the other women. They gave distinctness and decision.

He watched the stream that came on board and wondered. Amongst these numerous faces was there one he should remember? He thought there was not. How should he know?

They sailed at sunset as they had come in. They watched the city sink into the waves from which she rose. Her glory disappeared.

But up above her all along the west the sunset lingered. The sky glowed like an emerald sea, and little clouds, all crimson flushed, made islets on it. It seemed a last good-bye, a flush of

sorrow, and it said : ‘ Return, for in the West is home ; the East to which you go holds nothing for you. Lo, the seas are dark before you, and your light is left behind.’

They sat and watched in silence for their hearts were sore.

In the old days when men sailed forth their galleons from young Venice they went gladly. They went because the wander-thirst was on them and their souls were in Cathay. The world was wide, and held within its hands innumerable unknown places and peoples. It was full yet of romance, none who sailed could tell whither they would arrive nor what would befall them. There were dangers by sea and land, storms and hidden rocks, land thieves and water thieves. There were inhospitable shores, where no people lived, or only savages. Enemies lurked for them, and Death awaited them on every hand.

But were there not rewards for those who dared ? Were there not foreign kings who lived in palaces of gold who gave of it to those who came, orchards of golden apples, vineyards with jewelled grapes ? There were princesses fairer than mortal women to be wooed and won. They pined in fairy grottos, hidden in deep trees, for their deliverer.

And far beyond the sunrise were the magic seas where no one yet had sailed ; they lay in endless summer and they held the Islands of Desire.

Can you wonder that men sailed forth with shouts of gladness in those old days ? These were rewards well worth the winning. Hope went before them and the world was wide.

But now how different is it. More and more reluctantly we go forth to the East. Adventure and romance are dead. We know where we shall be each day, and when we shall arrive. There are no dangers nor are there great rewards. There are no unknown lands. Upon the chart are marked each land, each sea. The machine rules everything, ourselves, our days, our years. There is not anything unknown we may discover ; there are no palaces of gold ; there are no princes nor princesses. Every place is ruled, is levelled, flattened by a machine called Law ; men and their hopes and passions, women in their beauty and their tears, are but the flies upon its wheels. We used to travel on the wheels of Chance, but Chance is dead long, long ago ; now we go only round and round on the machine.

The Islands of Desire are sunk beneath the waves. They lived in phantasy alone, or like the clouds upon the sunset sky. No man shall find them ever more, shall feel their summer or be lulled beneath their trees.

So thought they as they watched the sunset fade behind them. For in front the seas were dark, and in the sky there was no flush, no light. There were only stars that hung far up; like eyes that watched but gave no light, no help. Romance is dead for ever. She with Chance and Fortune have been crushed beneath the wheels of Fate.

And yet,—are all the ways mapped out, and do we know our destinations? Our hearts, our souls, are they turned too upon a wheel, and do we know where they will go? Or are there charts that tell us? Can we say with certainty, ‘I go to this land or to that?’ Are there no magic seas where no man yet has sailed, no island we may find and make our own and reign the only King for ever? Are there no fairy princes left to take a maiden by the hand, awaken her and lead her to his palace all of gold? Is all the world grown old and grey?

There is a country yet where all is young;

where all is strange and new. Of that country nothing ever will be known. Though many men have travelled there, they make no maps ; though women have arrived they have never told the road to follow. There is no road, no path, no track, for no one ever yet has gone the same path as his predecessor. Each must make his way alone, his way anew, a way that will close after him and leave no trace. In that heart country there are seas that no ship has ever sailed. There are new lands no foot has ever trod. There are islands girt with the inviolate sea, an island for each man who dares. The winds blow there and waft the ship in their own way. There is no compass, and the stars wheel round and round and laugh.

Only the winds that blow from heaven are true. They know the way and only they. The mariner who is wise quits then the helm and spreads his sails and sits upon the prow. He sits and watches while the gales take him across the uncharted sea.

He watches, and at last the golden mist dissolves and shows him he has reached these Islands of Desire.

They sat on deck until the light had faded and the darkness was all round them ; till the night was late. There was a silence all along the decks. They sat and looked across the night, as if against its blackness to picture what had been.

CHAPTER VIII

A SAPPHIRE sea that stretched to the horizon, a plate of bluest water bounded by a rim, and above the inverted bowl of clearest heaven. It seemed always the same sea, tossing its waves into little crests of foam, running, rising, falling ; it seemed always the same sky set above it, cloudless and full of light. And in the middle, to all appearance fixed immovably though moving always, was the ship. The waves were cleft before her bows, they hurried along her sides, they closed in foam behind her ; she bowed in long and stately measure like a great sea-creature in a long-timed canter of rhythmic rise and fall. Yet there seemed no result : the blue horizon rim came never nearer, the heavens never changed. Only the sun climbed up the great blue bowl, hung in the zenith, and then fell again.

‘It seems to me a new world,’ the girl said.
‘I have never before been out of sight of land

with nothing but the sea and sky. I have never before been with such strange people ; I mean so near them, able to make friends with them if I want.'

'Are they strange?'

'Yes, they are strange. They are of so many different nations. These Germans, Austrians, Italians ; I think that man over there is Greek ; there is the Indian girl, and then there are ourselves.'

'True,' answered Holt, 'we are a mixed company.'

'And not in nationalities alone, but in other things. Look, there are nuns. Their dress is ugly, but it gives to them a dignity and personality. They have their way of life and their belief, and are not ashamed of either. Nowadays in England we all try to be the same and have no individuality.'

'Yes, we are ashamed to be ourselves. But perhaps we have no selves to be. We are but coins struck from out a mint in the image and superscription of our country, and that is all. We are of it, not of ourselves. Some day, perhaps, we shall have a reaction, and localities and individuals again have life.'

‘There are these German women. Mrs. Holman told me that they are missionaries. They are girls going to the East to marry men they have never seen.’

‘Yes, it is true. These broad wedding rings they wear are their betrothal rings. They bind them to a man they have not seen, to be half of him, to share their lives with him.’

‘How can they do it?’ asked the girl.

‘How can the nuns abjure all that seems to make life worth the living and still be happy? I do not know. Women are strange creatures.’

‘Not stranger than you men,’ she answered. ‘You are a mystery to us as we to you.’

Holt nodded. ‘I suppose,’ he said, ‘we seem so, but to ourselves we are quite simple.’

The girl laughed. ‘As to ourselves we women are quite simple. We wonder when you talk of our mystery. Wherein lies that mystery?’

He looked at her and shook his head. ‘If I could tell you where the mystery lay I should have solved it. I can no more tell where it lies than why I should like talking to you.’ He saw her face was beautiful, her colour like the texture of a flower, her smile like sunshine on the sea, yet he knew that the charm was not in them. They

gave it strength and meaning, but the magic lay much deeper.

She looked up with a sudden deepening of her colour which quickly passed. 'Tell me,' she said, 'something about the men: Who is the happy old man with thick white hair?'

'He is a German, a Professor. I don't know yet what it is exactly he professes, but I have been told that it is insects and plants. He is going to German East Africa for some Society.'

'He looks too old to travel to such places. He should be at home. Why does he travel?'

Holt shook his head. 'Why do some work more than for daily bread? Why do they travel to the waste places of the earth, run into danger and face death? Why do they not take the rest they want? A woman or a child or children; that is the answer.'

She looked at him in silence drawing her brows together. 'Is that so always?'

'I think so, nearly always.'

'It is not for money, not for fame?'

He shook his head. 'It is women who care for these, not men. Men care for work sometimes, but never for the reward of work beyond a simple measure, except——'

‘Except?’

‘To give away.’

‘To whom?’

‘To women.’

‘You know that it is so with the Professor?’

‘I know nothing. I only guess. Yet I think I am not wrong.’

For a time they sat in silence, then he continued :

‘I had a talk with him this morning. We were on deck together long before breakfast. It is the glory of the day the sunrising hour. He came and sat by me, and he reproached me.’

‘Why did he do that?’

‘He said we English were so insular, that every one made friends except us; we live upon an island and we make islands of ourselves. We make a cold and misty sea about our personalities. Yes, it is true.’

‘Why should it be true?’

‘Partly, perhaps, the force of habit. In England, now, all society is organised in strata. All our acquaintance lies on our own level. We never know those who are above us or beneath. We know that they exist, and that is all. Therefore we become extraordinarily narrow. We are in touch only with one form of life and thought,

so that we come to think that is the absolute. Whatever differs from that is wrong.'

'Yet,' said the girl slowly, 'it is the people that differ from us who make the colour of our lives.'

'Nothing could be more true than that,' he answered; 'and more, they make our lives the wider, they make us realise ourselves the more.'

'Ourselves?' she asked. 'How does it make us realise ourselves?'

'Because,' he answered, 'they are part of us, part of ourselves.'

She looked at him. 'How can that be? I do not understand.'

'You know,' he said, 'the Eastern way of looking at the world. They see it whole. We all belong to one great life, as all water-drops are of the sea. Therefore every one and all life is part of our wider self.'

'It is hard to understand,' she answered.

'It is not so hard,' he answered, 'if you realise that every one has within him a little of every one else. We have all our speciality, but we have also a little of every one else's. A man may be, say, a soldier. That is his outstanding quality; but he has a little of the priest, the

merchant, the artisan, the statesman, the thief, the labourer, the convict. He may be brave, he has within him something of the coward ; he may be upright, he has a touch of dishonesty.'

'And so with women?'

'So with women. Nay, more, man may be man, he has a touch of woman, and she of man. All nature is akin to us because we have in us something of all nature. She cannot strike a note but what we have the echo.'

'If that were so,' she said, 'that all the world is part of us, we should love all the world. Yet we have hates.'

He shook his head. 'Do not we hate ourselves sometimes? Is there in all the world anything that we hate so much as sometimes we hate a thing within ourselves?'

She looked across the sea and did not answer.

'Therefore,' he said, 'in trying to understand other people we are really trying to understand something that is also in ourselves. We all contain all possibilities.'

'Would it not,' she answered, 'be easier to understand these in ourselves?'

'No one,' he answered, 'ever understood himself. That is the last thing possible. You

might as well pull yourself from a river by catching your own hair.'

She laughed. 'I think some one did that once, did he not?'

'Baron Munchausen did.'

She laughed again. 'I hear the luncheon-bell,' she said.

The passengers all lunched on deck at two long tables. It was pleasanter far than in the hot saloon. They sat just as they wished, or as luck seated them. They were not bound by any iron rule. Therefore the meals were pleasant and full of change.

The early afternoon passed in a half-dream. The hot sun gave a drowsiness, the glowing hour a peace. Then they woke up for tea, which Mrs. Holman made for her own party.

To them were added a Mr. and Mrs. Graham, and the seven became almost a family. They drew together naturally as like to like. They sat together, talked together, and after tea the men played bridge.

And so they dropped into the ship routine, which consists of doing nothing in long pleasant intervals, with meals for commas and nights for periods.

No one does anything on board a ship. You cannot. You have no privacy and no quiet. Yet you are not idle, for the ship works for you. Its heart is ever beating and its arms are waving. That is enough for all. Then the sea calls your eyes and thoughts to it, to far-off vague indefinable things that have no substance, dreams that have no waking, questions that have no answer.

The hours pass over as the seas pass under you and leave no mark.

CHAPTER IX

THAT night was dark, for a light mist had blown across the sky and hid the stars. The sea looked black, but little phosphorescent touches where it broke relieved its sombreness. It surged against the side, rising and falling in unbroken rhythm.

The decks were nearly empty, for it was late. Within the smoking-room a few men lingered. Two women stood at the companion-door, their figures clear against the light, and near the rail a man was sitting. Another man came from the darkness, drew a chair forward, and sat down by him.

‘I thought that you had gone to bed,’ said Holt.

‘I thought the same of you. But you were not in the cabin, so I came up again.’

‘What think you of the voyage?’

‘I think it may be pleasant.’

‘So think I. We have no sweepstakes on the run; we have no quoits. We are not tyrannised

over by young men and girls who want to have "a jolly time." The ship is slow, but will get there some time, and any time is time enough.'

'I want,' said Warden, 'to make a compact with you.'

The other was silent. Somehow the words inferred that everything was not well. Warden went on :

'The voyage is pleasant ; we are all good friends. So the beginning is of happy omen. I want the end to be so.'

'Why should it not be so ?'

'It will be so, only let us have an understanding—shall we ?'

Holt moved a little in his chair. A strong sense of discomfort took him. Why put in words that which is best unsaid ? His silence carried with it opposition to something, he knew not what.

'Listen,' said Warden. 'We have been but two days together—one day in Venice, one day on board. We are good friends already because we think that we have met before, and yet there is between us a difficulty rising. If we let it rise——'

'I know of none.'

'Yet there is one. It is the girl.'

‘Do not you think,’ said Holt, ‘that it is better not to talk of women?’

‘It is a rule, and a good rule, but every rule has its exception. Do not misunderstand me. Let me tell you what I mean before you jump to a conclusion.’

‘Very well. Speak on.’

‘We both like her. It is natural we should. We like to talk to her and sit beside her. The voyage affords us opportunity. There is enough for both.’

He stopped and smiled. ‘Let us play fair. Why should we compete? It makes discomfort for us both and her. A girl must hate to see two men in rivalry for her favour as if she were a bone and they two dogs.’

Holt wondered if it were so.

‘I do not suppose,’ continued Warden, ‘that either you or I have any other object than to pass a pleasant hour. I am not inferring anything. We like her company, possibly she likes ours. Let us share and share alike.’

Holt was relieved. ‘Certainly,’ he said, ‘and I agree. To-day is mine, to-morrow yours, and the next day mine again?’

‘Yes, that is what I mean.’

‘Of course,’ said Holt, ‘it does not bind her. She can talk to either of us or neither of us, or talk to both of us at once.’

‘Of course. But give her a fair chance, and let us give each other fair chances also.’ He stopped a moment.

‘Suppose,’ said Holt, ‘I were in love with her or thought I might be, or it was so with you, would we then make a compact? Is not a woman for the winning?’

‘The prize of victory?’

‘Yes. Would he not be a laggard who gave up the fight? Races are not won by walking all in line.’

‘If it were so,’ said Warden, ‘that both of us were in love with her, as we are not, still it would make no difference. Love is not a fight.’

‘In the old days men carried off their loves.’

‘No one, in days of old or ever, carried off a girl who was unwilling, unless he was a madman. Flight was a weapon not against the woman, but against that which kept the woman from the man. Theirs is the decision. Men may fight; the woman gives the prize to whom she wills—to the last or to the first.’

And Holt knew that it was true. A woman

is not won. Because she is not won she is the greater treasure. That which we earn or take we do not care for, that which is given us free is what we prize. Love is a gift. It has no price. A man would give everything in the world for love, but it would be utterly contemned.

‘I do not know,’ said Warden, ‘if you are in love with her or ever will be. I do not know if I shall ever be. I am not a marrying man; my regiment is my home. But if we should be, then the decision still will rest with her. Our compact has no reference to that or could affect it. But it will preserve our friendship and make things pleasanter all round.’

Holt looked across the night. Far off a steamer passed, her lights a fallen constellation on the sea.

‘So be it.’

Then they sat and smoked in silence. A peace was on them and a comradeship that came from that forgotten past. Let the future hold what it might, the past and present would be true.

Yet when he was alone and Warden gone, his thoughts came back and troubled him.

What had Warden meant? Nothing, perhaps, except just what he said, that any sort of com-

petition for a girl's favour, for her company, is in bad form. He had not inferred he was in love with her, and indeed he showed no signs of it, nor that Holt was. Perhaps, too, if he had thought Holt was he would have feared to touch the subject. He had spoken in all frankness. And yet his words had roused ideas he had not meant.

Holt looked into the night as if the dark might hold some sign for him, with mental eyes he tried to see into himself.

Was he in love? Was the discomfort that he felt the stirring of the pool, and was this girl the angel?

He knew that he had never loved before. Women had drawn him for a moment and then passed into forgetfulness. Perhaps she also would do so. And yet she was not as the others. Love? What was love; how should one know if it had come? How did she differ from those other women who had come and gone? Her eyes were clear and soft, but so were many women's. Her cheeks were full and fair, her round red lips made for the kissing. But so were the cheeks and lips of many women. All this might be, must be a part of love. It could not be the whole.

What then was love?

Was it that the girl was clever, witty, that she talked and made him talk and think?

He did not know if she was clever or was not. He did not care. She did not talk. He remembered now that she said little. Though he tried he could not remember anything she had said, nor did she make him think.

Her presence troubled him. When he sat beside her his heart beat quicker and his breath was hotter. His brain was full of things that came and went and had no shape, like winds that blew across the sea. Was this love?

Then he remembered a story Hafiz tells about a Sultan and his favourite page. The page was full of life and gaiety and happiness. He made the laughter of the Court, his bright carelessness was like a sunbeam in the palace. The Sultan would have given a hundred ministers for him. He disappeared.

The Court was dull without the page, the Sultan sent throughout the city. 'Where is the Sultan's page?' the heralds cried in every street and lane. The Sultan missed him, asked for him. At last his messengers came back and said: 'The Sultan's page is ill. He sits alone beside the

desert and he looks into the distance. Nothing can move him and his eyes are full of tears.'

The Sultan called his Vizier. 'Let the hakims go and medicine my page, for he is ill. He sits beside the desert and his eyes are closed. Surely he is in pain, and he may die. Lo! I will give half of my treasure to him who brings me back my page such as he used to be.'

The Vizier laughed. 'The page,' he said, 'is ill in truth, and yet no hakims even of paradise could cure him. The page is ill, yet he is happier in his sickness than the well. The page's eyes have tears, but they are sweeter than all laughter in the world. He hath in truth a sickness, but he will not die.'

'It is some madness,' said the Sultan.

'It is some madness. There is mystery in his head and in his heart a flame.'

'Whence comes this fire and mist?' the Sultan asked.

The Vizier laughed again. 'They call it love.'

The Sultan sighed. 'My page is lost to me,' he said. 'Never again will he be what he was.'

They call it love. They give a name to that which no man understands. They call it love, as if that were an answer.

The ship had passed. Its lights had died into the distance. The mists that veiled the heavens had cleared, and overhead Orion hung his belt. The distances reopened.

Then what is love?

The surges rose and fell. They dashed against the side. The ocean sang its everlasting song.

‘I know what love is. Who shall know but I? He who would learn must ask me. I am love; the sea that rolls about the world and beats on all the shores is love incarnate, love and hate, and hope and fear, and birth and death, for all are one. Myriads of drops have died in me and from them I am born. Alone what life is in a drop of water; in a man, a woman? Each must die and win thereby a wider life, and so the sea is born, the sea of immortality.

‘You ask me what is love? It is that force that drains two drops to one and in the end all to the sea.’

That is the ocean song.

He listened and he understood. ‘If that be love,’ he said, ‘I will not love. Why should I lose myself? How shall I know, be sure, that by so losing I should find my wider self? And is it

true that man's love to a woman is but the beginning of an ever-widening love? Why should I give myself? I do not and I will not. I will not.'

What makes the twinkle in the stars when they look down on men?

CHAPTER X

‘Do you know,’ said Mrs. Holman, ‘we all have names?’

The girl looked up. ‘What sort of names, and who gave them to us?’

‘Ship names, and it seems the giver is Captain Warden, or he and Mr. Holt together.’

‘What do they call us?’

‘The Indian girl they call “the little Princess.” That is a good name. She has a dignity and grace.’

Miss Ormond nodded. ‘I like her, she is so quiet and yet so clever.’

‘Her two admirers they call Hamlet and Othello. Hamlet because he is a Dane, Othello because he comes from Venice and has a dark complexion, also it appears because he is jealous.’

‘Has she admirers?’ asked Miss Ormond.

‘You have no eyes, my dear. They follow her about. They are in competition for her favour. She is amused at them.’

The girl was silent, thinking. There seemed to her something jarring in the eternal pursuit by men of women. Had women then no peace unless they were ugly? And did men only care for them to make love to?

‘And then,’ said Mrs. Holman, ‘these impertinent men have named us, too. Harry and I are Darby and Joan, and you they call “the girl.”’

“‘The girl?’” she asked; “‘the girl?’” Is that a name? It has no special meaning.’

‘It has,’ said Mrs. Holman, ‘a meaning perhaps more special than any of the others.’

‘I think it rude,’ she answered, ‘to give names.’

The annoyance was but momentary and passed. Mrs. Holman went below and she was left alone. She looked along the decks at the people sitting in twos or threes, and Holt’s talk of yesterday returned. Then every one who lives has, if he knew it, something different from all the rest, something the world has need of. Every one is part of a great whole. The life of every one has in it some special meaning. The meaning may be great or small. We may have many talents or but one. All of us have at least one talent, and the world has need of that. What special meaning had each of these people who looked for the most

part so plain and commonplace? If there was any, it was well hidden. The men, she could understand, might have each a meaning in that each had his work which the world needed. But the women?

As far as she could see no woman had a meaning except to one man. There were exceptions, may be, a Florence Nightingale, a Rosa Bonheur; but of all the women on the ship, which had any meaning to the world? They were wives of men, called by their husbands' names, branded as belonging to men. Had women then never any value in themselves, did they mean nothing? Did she herself mean nothing except that she might some day be a man's wife? Was life so empty and so narrow? Beside the lifeboat, in a corner kept always for them, sat the five nuns. There rested on them a sense of calm and dignity. They looked quite happy as they read, or talked in short, slow sentences. No man was near them. They were meant for no man. They lived their lives apart. What was their meaning to the world? Or was it that they had drawn from out the world because they had no meaning for it nor it for them?

The youngest Sister, Cecilia, caught her look

and smiled an invitation. The girl drew her chair beside them.

‘You are so quiet,’ she said; ‘nothing troubles you.’

‘There is nothing to trouble us. Perhaps it bothers you that the ship is so slow. Perhaps you are in a hurry to get somewhere.’

‘No,’ said the girl, ‘I do not care; I am not going anywhere in particular, and I don’t care how long it takes. I have nothing to do there nor anywhere.’

The Sister looked at her. ‘That is the difference. We know whither we go, and it is not the ship that takes us. Whether she is still or travels we go forward to our end.’

The girl was silent. She knew what the nun meant. Their lives were directed towards some object, towards some end, and no matter where their bodies were, their souls travelled always to it.

‘Is it a pleasant end?’

‘Surely.’ The Sister looked up and smiled, and in her eyes there was a certainty of happiness and content.

‘Tell me, where are you going?’

Another Sister answered, the eldest Sister, Teresa, who was in charge of the party. Per-

haps she did not know what the question meant. Perhaps she wished to avoid the deeper meaning.

‘We are not all going together to the same place. We separate at Bombay and go to different convents, some in Bengal, some elsewhere. Sister Cecilia goes to Calcutta, but I to the west coast of Madras.’

‘Have you been there before?’

She shook her head. ‘None of us have been there, or we should not be on board.’

‘Then you will not return?’

Both Sisters shook their heads, and it seemed for the moment as if a sadness took them as when a cloud veils the sun.

For, after all, to every one who lives there is a country and a people. Whatever you may be, whatever your end in life, nothing will alter that, will make you quite forget it, will stop the strong desire for home. And to leave home for ever, to know and realise it is for ever, that never more will your eyes behold its light, never more will you hear its voices, brings heaviness to the heart. But it passed and the light returned.

‘It is very hot on the coast of Malabar,’ said Sister Teresa. ‘It is hot for all the year. It is

never cool. For myself, I like the heat.' She laughed.

'Where I go,' said Sister Cecilia, 'it is cool in winter, but in the summer it is hotter than on her side. So it comes to the same thing.'

'And you go to convert the people?'

Both Sisters shook their heads. 'We are not missionaries. That is men's work; it is for priests and not for us. We go to live our lives; that is the first thing, and then we have schools for the little girls and try to teach them what we can. It makes life better.'

'I am sorry,' said the girl; 'I did not know. I never talked to nuns before. I only heard of them.'

'Not always good, perhaps.'

The girl coloured. 'Perhaps those who told me did not know much either. I always supposed you were unhappy.'

'Are we unhappy?'

The girl shook her head. 'I never saw any people so happy as you seem.'

'Say as we are.'

'I am sure it is "as you are."'

'Why should we be unhappy?' asked the younger Sister.

‘I do not know, only I supposed from what I was told——’ She began to feel uncomfortable, but a look at the Sisters reassured her. They were amused and not offended—amused as a grown person is with a child’s misunderstandings. Yet even Sister Teresa was not much older than she was.

‘Because we were here?’

‘That was one reason.’

‘Because we had renounced the pleasures of the world?’

‘Yes, and because——’

‘Because we had no husbands?’

The girl blushed, but the nuns were full of merriment. It touched them as a summer breeze touches a lake, calling up ripples.

‘Yes,’ she said, gaining courage, ‘because of all these things, and I supposed no one became a nun except from some disappointment.’

‘I have been told that women ought to marry, that there is nothing else for them to do. If then they become nuns, it is because they have failed in some way of their only end.’

‘And become nuns to hide themselves and make the best of it?’ Sister Teresa laughed.

‘Yes, or because they had to; because they were forced.’

The Sisters became more serious, as if though they could afford to laugh at the first idea the last were unkind and bitter. They lowered their faces. And the girl became unhappy again. She had offended them because she had said the truth. But Sister Teresa raised her face and said : ‘ Do you think that I was forced ? ’

The girl looked at her, looked in her eyes, so clear and so serene, at the expression of her face, where self-mastery and courage and content were clearly written. She turned to Sister Cecilia and read the same things there, and she found her answer.

‘ No ! ’ she said clearly and assuredly.

‘ It was because you did not understand,’ they answered kindly ; and a great desire came upon her to understand.

At first she had been half-afraid of the nuns, fearing that they would try to convert her—make her into a Catholic, if not a nun herself. She had doubted if it were safe to be friends with them ; she kept on her guard as against an insidious foe. But when she herself had come and talked to them they never spoke of religion at all, and even now when she opened the subject they were almost shy ; they did not respond. They turned

the subject, talking of Ireland, from which most of them had come originally ; of France, where they had been in convents ; of the ship life, of India, of everything but their beliefs. Far from pressing them upon her they kept them hidden, as if they possessed a great treasure which they were proud of, indeed as the conspicuousness of their dress showed, but which they desired to keep to themselves, lest it should be profaned by vulgar touch or sight.

Yet as inevitably as a needle to the North the girl came back to what she wished to know.

‘ I would like to understand,’ she said.

But they were silent, sewing quietly.

‘ Will you not tell me ?’

Sister Teresa raised her face and looked. In the girl’s face there was a trouble, there was a need.

‘ Will you not tell me ?’ she asked again.

‘ I do not know,’ and the sister shook her head. ‘ You are not of our religion. You have your own.’

‘ Mine tells me only that women ought to marry.’

‘ A priest could tell you better. We are only simple women.’

‘ I do not ask it of your religion, but of you,’

and woman's eyes looked into woman's eyes. 'A woman can tell a woman. I do not want the ideas of a man, whether he be priest or layman, but a woman's.'

The Sister was troubled. Her heart went out towards the girl, and yet her words repelled her. 'Truth is truth,' she thought, 'whether man or woman say it, and the Church's truth is in the Church.'

'Why should you wish to know,' she asked, 'and what? Do not you know what nuns are?'

'No!' the girl replied. 'I do not know. It is true that I have been told, but I see now that what I was told was wrong.'

'I am glad of that,' the Sister answered. 'Yes, what is told is often wrong, but what is seen and is felt is true. The mind seeks always, but it is the heart alone that finds.'

'Why are you all so happy?'

The Sister smiled. 'I might answer you in two ways. I might say as a Catholic and as a Sister that we are happy because we trust in God and know Him, because we have given ourselves to Him and He has given His peace to us. I might tell you that and it would be true, yet you would not understand.'

‘Because I am not a Catholic?’

‘Not for that reason only. There are many Catholic women of whom but few have given themselves to religion, and those who have not know as little of our secret as you do. There are Sisters in other faiths who feel as we do—not, perhaps, all our happiness, but some of it.’

‘Is it then because you are Sisters and have renounced all that the world holds worth the having that you are happy?’

‘No! It is not what we have renounced but what we have gained that makes us happy. And yet that gain is not for all, for if that were true then should all women be as we are!’

‘And they should not?’

The Sister shook her head.

‘What is the secret then of happiness?’

‘There is no universal secret. Do you think one truth suffices for all women or all men? The world is various, and to every one there is a truth never quite the same as that of others. There is a ray of light that, added to the others, makes the white light of God. No one can tell you what yours is.’

‘How can I learn?’

‘It is in your own heart, in the heart of every

man and every woman. There only will you find it. How to find it and keep it is the secret of all happiness. Look at the happy men and women ! It is they who know that they keep their truth.'

'And truth is many?'

'Truths, could we see them, are very many, yet in the end all truth is One. All truths are necessary to the Truth.'

'If you are happy, then it is because God has put it into your heart to renounce the world and men and pleasure, and live the lives you do ? There is no virtue in the life itself, or in the deeds, or in the sacrifice of self?'

'Not unless it is in your heart to do it. Some women are born to be married and have children ; they keep their truth in doing so, and it would be for them a sin to be as we are. But others as ourselves have put into our hearts a love for Christ alone, and we would never let another love replace it.'

'A lower love?'

'My dear, there is no higher and no lower. For every truth is true.'

The girl was silent, thinking. She felt a disappointment. She sought to have a truth given to her, and she was told to find it for herself.

How should she find it? How should she know?

Sister Teresa read her thoughts, as she had read those of other women before her.

‘You thought,’ she said, ‘that we should advise you to be a nun yourself, and we do not do so. You asked us for our secret, and we have given you nothing.’

‘You have made me think.’

‘You will not find a truth in thinking.’

‘I want to know what I should do in life, how I should find its happiness.’

‘And you thought we could tell you?’

‘Yes. You have it.’

‘We have it, but so have others. Mrs. Holman has it; ask her the secret.’

‘She is married.’

‘And you do not want to marry?’

‘I think not.’

‘Some day you will be sure, one way or another. The true things in life are those that are inevitable. If, indeed, God has made you to be a nun, He will tell you so. If He means you to marry, He will tell you so. In the great things of life never act until you must, until you cannot help it. No one can tell you the secret of happiness but God.’

It was their hour for evening prayers, and the nuns rose up and went away. But the girl sat still. How hard life was, and how could one ever know what it was right to do? The Sister said that truth would come, her heart would tell her; but so far her heart said only No. Suppose it always kept on saying No, she might as well be a limpet on a rock that even the tides cannot move. And of what value would be such a life?

CHAPTER XI

ONE day they came on deck to find the ship was motionless. Her engines had broken down, and so she lay like some great wounded thing upon the sea. A light wind blew, and the little waves came racing up to see her, wondering what was this black and ugly thing that lay so still, that was dead they thought. They raised their heads to look at her ; they laughed, they splashed their spray upon her in derision. And then they danced away gaily, joyfully, singing their ocean song, and glancing back in mockery over their lucent shoulders at the uncanny monster.

Above the northern horizon hung a peak suspended in the heavens. You could not see its base. The purple haze was folded over it and hid it ; but in the clear sky above, the sharp rock-summit stood revealed in clearest outline. The golden sunlight fell upon it like a glory, and upon its shoulders fields of purest snow shone like a

woman's skin gleaming through openings of her drapery.

But the ship's restfulness gave unrest to those on board. While she had throbbed and moved they had been content to rest, allowing her movement to stand for theirs. They had been soothed, lulled by her action as children by a cradle's rocking. But when she stopped, uneasiness attacked them. They could not sit, could not read, could hardly talk. They paced up and down as if to deceive themselves into the belief that they were doing something ; and when they stopped it was to gaze at the island far away. It gave their eyes a point to rest on, tired with the formless sea and sky, as a bird requires land to support it now and then.

Only the nuns were quiet ; nothing ever touched their peace. And the Professor, sitting in a long chair with book and pencil, seemed full of satisfaction. He read a little and made notes. He looked along the decks and laughed. He made more notes.

'This book,' he wrote, 'by my worthy brother, Clearasmud of Göttingen, is a painful and praiseworthy history of primitive marriage customs. He has read, he has collected, he has digested, he

has deduced. It is a monument of industry. Yet had my learned brother left his study in that great and ancient city and descended into its streets; had he, instead of reading books on marriage long ago, tried to find out a little of marriage to-day; had he, in fact, just learned the psychology of love, if not by painful experience in himself, yet by observation, he might have learned a good deal that would have prevented him making an ass of himself.'

The Professor put down his pen and smiled. 'Of course I shall have to alter that last,' he said to himself; 'we mustn't call each other names—even if the names are true.' He laughed out cheerily and startled Hamlet who was dozing near him. The young man pulled his chair round the corner, away from the Professor, with ostentatious annoyance, but the Professor did not mind.

'In primitive times,' says Clearasmud, 'marriage was done by capture. The young men were forbidden to marry in their own clans, and had to capture their wives from clans that had other totems. A wolf could not marry a wolf, nor a rabbit marry a rabbit. The young wolf-brave, then, when the marriage thirst came on him, went out with his companions and waited beside a

stream or some such likely place till a squirrel or an eel maiden came down to draw her family water or to bathe. He jumped out with fierce cries of love ; she ran ; he pursued with his companions. The girl doubled, dodged, hid ; but finally her lover overtook her, and then after calming her cries and agitation with his club, he dragged her off by the hair. Such was the primitive marriage by capture. It was unromantic.' The Professor laughed again, but he had his corner to himself.

'He writes ingeniously,' he remarked ; 'he argues with great subtlety. He is not unworthy as an antagonist. He puts the deduction first, and states it as a fact. Then he takes his tiny mis-observed fact and adds it on behind. Thus he appears to have two solid facts supporting each other, when he has really but one very slender fact fluttering forlornly at the tail of an absurd deduction. No one knows that primitive marriage was as he says. It is a pure hypothesis and founded on no facts. Let us look at what he calls his facts.

'There have been observed among semi-civilised people in various parts of the world a marriage ceremony, or, rather, a pre-marriage ceremony,

which, varying in details, is much the same in principle.

‘The girl on foot or mounted, accompanied or not by other girls, runs away. The groom pursues. He is impeded by the girl’s relatives, by her friends; he has a fairly rough time of it. The girl escapes, turns, hides; is often faster and more active than he is. But in the end she is always caught. He captures her and she is his.

‘That is the fact, the only fact, and that imperfectly observed, on which he builds his theories. Imperfectly observed, for he has omitted the beginning and the end of it. In the beginning the girl lures on the man to follow her. She looks at him over her shoulder as she runs. So he pursues. The end is also wrong, for the girl is never really captured. She could escape had she the will. The groom could never catch her. She runs at first from instinct, but she never really wishes to escape. Therefore she does not run too fast; she tires before he does, stops, and gives herself in the end always.

‘That is the error of my worthy brother, and it leads him into wildest phantasy of commonplace. No madness is so absurd as science when divorced from feeling. He makes a theory that

early men carried off their wives by force, that before the ceremony of the club they were utter strangers, that the woman had no say in all of it. He thinks that a man, even a savage, is such an idiot that he knows no better than to allow chance or his choice alone to decide who shall be his other half through life, the mother of his children. He supposes that women are built to forgive brutality from an utter stranger, the violence, nay, more, the being deprived of their right to give themselves, and that so brutalised they would make wives. He ignores the god called Love that was from the beginning, in animals, in insects, and in plants. A world unknown of love.'

The Professor laughed again a hearty laugh. 'Dere is not a leetle girl but could tell him better.'

'What could the little girl tell him, Professor?' asked Warden, looking in.

The Professor winked a wink. No, it was not professional, but professors are only men—at least the best of them are. And then the Professor was glad, for had he not Clearasmud on the hip? He winked and said, 'Why are you walking to and fro so hungry?'

'Because it is not lunch-time yet.'

‘And tell me, where is Miss Ormond then?’

Warden looked at him with suspicion. ‘But you can see, Professor, she is talking to the nuns. What do you want with her? Is she the little girl who could tell better?’

‘Go! go!’ said the Professor. ‘I write and you disturb.’

Warden disappeared and the Professor’s notes continued.

‘My brother Clearasmud, let me expound to you. Your facts are wrong, your deductions wrong, you are all wrong. You think what you write of is of the long past, that it is history, and will occur no more. You think that there is evolution in marriage and that it changes; you think that in this matter human nature has varied. Oh, Clearasmud, were you never a student in Göttingen, or were there then no maidens that you saw in the past days? Had you no eyes?’

‘Marriage by capture! long ago! a total stranger! the woman with no choice at all! Oh, Clearasmud, even a beetle could tell you more than all your history!’

‘Man loves all women. You have observed that, and you think that nothing more was wanted. Man had but to take the first woman and all

would be well. Nature gave him this universal love for her own reasons, that he should help and protect all women. But marriage is more than that, and is the product of a special love, and nature wills that this love be proved.

‘Nature therefore makes maidens coy. Man loves, pursues ; the maiden runs and hides. He stops. She is not worth the pursuing. He tries another and another. But they all run. Then one looks back. She runs, but as she goes she beckons. She does not stop, for he must prove he loves her—prove it to himself and her. He follows, he falls, he suffers ; enemies trip him, hunt him, would kill him, still he follows. The girl’s flight has proved to him which girl he really loves. It weeds out all faint and elementary emotions and only leaves the greater. So does nature tell man which woman he would make a wife of. She makes him suffer for his knowledge, but still he gains it. And the girl’s running shows that she is innocent, afraid ; that she has had no former lover, that she is not accepted within the mystic circle. She is a neophyte. She runs, he follows.

‘Now take the girl. To every normal girl in every normal society, savage or civilised, there come many men, and of these men some are

attracted. She repels them, flies from them ; they stop. Then comes one different from the others. She flies, but she looks back. He follows. She hides among the women, but looks out. Nature has proved to her that the man loves her, and she knows that she loves him or she would never have looked back across her shoulder. She lets herself be caught ; she gives herself at last.

‘No, Clearasmud, you are wrong if you think that woman, savage or modern, is to be stunned and captured and then will make a faithful wife. The faithful wives are those who give themselves. There must be giving on either side. There must be love on either side—a different love of course, but yet a love. The woman is never passive. If she be passive before marriage she becomes active afterwards—in the wrong way. The life and happiness of man, savage or civilised, is at his wife’s mercy. Nature knows that, and she knows better than to let him take a snake to his bosom. His instinct will not let him. Unless he be mad, he tires when she flies too far and fast and looks not back to encourage him to follow. He tires and stops. He loves ; she does not. That will not do. You want two yes-es to be an affirmative. So though she runs she must look back

over her shoulder from the very first. She must let him catch her in the end. And though he use the club to complete his capture, it must be at the call of her desire, not his. So, my unlearned brother, what you took to be a relic of a barbarian custom is nothing of the sort, it is a mystery play.

‘It is a mystery play not of the past, but of all time ; it has a truth that is not dead, but lives. The man who made this play knew of that truth, and those who watched it understood. They knew their world. They knew that there were great true forces, great true loves that join man and woman and make the future of the world. This could never have evolved under the rule of chance. They knew and felt the spirit. But the heir of all the ages, Clearasmud, sees in the world only the club, the spear, the brute. He never raises his eyes. So he has fallen below the savage, below animals, below even the insects and the fish. He thinks that evolution’s God was chance and force in man, and that woman has no God to care for her at all or live within her.

‘And that is science !’

The Professor shut his note-book with a bang.

‘I wish that you were here upon this ship, my

learned brother, and I would make you see things. I would show you that what you think is of the long dead past is of the present. There are two mystery plays begun.

‘In each play there is a girl and two men.

‘One girl is English ; the men who follow her are English. She has looked back at both of them, I think, though more perhaps at one than at the other.

‘The two men follow. And now a fear has taken her. She runs the faster and she begins to hide. She hides amongst the women, as they all do. She clings to her own personality and sex as soon as instinct warns her of her danger. The men are troubled. They ran for fun at first, but now they ask themselves the question if she is worth pursuit. She asks herself the question will she be pursued ; if so, by whom ?

‘Will they both follow still ? Will she look back ? If so, at which of them ? I wish, my brother, you could watch my mystery play.

‘The other girl is Indian. Her lovers are a Dane and an Italian. With her it has not gone so far. The play is just beginning, and she beckons to them both. She has not begun to fear nor run.

‘My worthy primitive Professor Clearasmud, I think that you could learn more on this ship than from all the books that you have read ; more of the present, more of the past. You think you find a key to read the present in the past. More truly will you find in life to-day a way to unlock the secrets of the past. The master-key to all evolution is not chance, but love. Animals and men rise as they love ; they fall as love leaves them.’

‘Professor,’ said Holt, ‘you have some joke. Tell it to me. I find the ship life somewhat tiresome.’

‘You find it tiresome?’ said the Professor, with mock sympathy.

‘Lend me a book.’

‘Take then this book. Read it with care.’

‘I will.’

‘Then disbelieve it all,’ and the Professor laughed.

CHAPTER XII

So the *Marchesa* lounged through autumn seas towards Port Said. She was in no hurry and she broke no records. Big liners passed her by contemptuously ; lateen-sailed boats from out the islands of the Ionian Sea almost kept pace with her. She knew the world was round, and that the sooner to her destinations the sooner she would come back again. Therefore why hurry ? Life is in the going and the coming, not in the end—because there is no end.

And every day the men felt that the girl was leaving them. She talked to them still, but the talks were shorter. She listened, but her thoughts were not with what they said. A new idea of life was dawning in her East. She saw far off a land she had not dreamt of, lit with new lights, and where shadows were of pearl. She wondered if it were real, or but a phantasy of dawn.

Into Holt's heart there came a sense of lone-

liness, a helplessness as when a man sees that which he desires drift down the stream beyond his reach. He would have seized her and drawn her to him, but he could not. He only could follow on the bank, and hope some eddy in the stream would draw her nearer. All streams flow to the sea, and there all things are lost.

Perhaps, as some compensation, the other life on board the ship came nearer to him. He seemed to understand it more, that the tie was real that made humanity all one. If his brain was slow, his sensitiveness made amends by being quicker; he saw with keener eyes.

The little Princess and her lovers amused him. She was so frankly pleased with them. Perhaps in all her life this was the first time that men had wooed her. She found it pleasant, and she gave herself to it without a doubting thought. Soon she would come into a new morrow where all this life and Europe would be a yesterday. Why not take what the gods were offering her? When Hamlet came and said that there were porpoises upon the bows, she went with him to look. She had seen a hundred shoals of porpoises. What matter? The foreward deck was empty. To lean upon an anchor fluke and watch the spray

dashed from the bows, to mark the gambols of the black sea-pigs, so joyous in their dances, to feel the fresh sea wind,—all these in company, were they not well? Hamlet was taciturn, but comradeship lies not in spoken words. At night Othello played on the guitar and sang. Sometimes she made accompaniment on the piano or played a waltz of Chopin's. Music alone has lost its fulness; we sing or play not to ourselves, but others. Othello to the Princess, and she to him made harmony. Why not?

If Hamlet's white face looking through the window from the outer dark seemed like a tortured ghost, that, too, came into the music, the governing discord that it needed. To-morrow there would be new porpoises, no doubt; and to Othello porpoises were poison. Each to his time, and both times for the Princess. So was there played a little comedy. Sometimes, indeed, Warden or Holt took hands. Each had his favourite. Warden's was Hamlet, and Holt's was Othello. They sought for chances, each to help his own man and keep the balance steady between the North and South, music and porpoises. Did Hamlet linger too long upon the foreward deck, a messenger would fetch him back to skittles.

Did Othello's songs become too numerous and melancholy, Warden joined in and sang 'John Peel.' Perhaps a consciousness that she was being protected delicately, dawned sometimes upon the Indian girl, and made her still more gay and careless.

'And yet,' said Warden, 'it does not seem possible that she should marry either, or that either should marry her.'

'Probably,' said Holt, 'none of the three are thinking of it. They laugh and play while the sun shines. If it should get too hot, or the rain should come, they will all go home.'

'You know,' said Warden, 'that what attracts the men about the girl is her romance. It seems to them that to be Indian is to have stepped out of the *Arabian Nights* and to be able to step back there again. Last night Hamlet was asking me all about India.'

'What did you tell him?'

'I told him what you or any one else would tell him, that to go to India is to change one's skies, and that is all. We live in India, but we are not of India.'

'Yes, it is true,' said Holt. 'We have forced our company upon her, but she holds herself away

from us. We live our own lives. As far as knowing India goes, we might for the most of us be in England. We know but little, and that wrong, because we are tempted to think we know more than we do. There is romance about their lives still. They have not bound themselves to a machine called "progress," as we have. But that romance does not touch us.'

'Therefore it does not exist for us,' said Warden. 'That is what I told him. But he would not believe it.'

'He thinks she is a key?'

'Yes, and for her it is the same. The West is to her as the East to Hamlet and Othello. She has lived in Germany three years while she grew to be a woman. She has been dazzled with the strength of Europe, with its matured power, its art, its music. A Western seems to her to have the magic ring and to be able to call up genii by rubbing it. She is leaving it. Perhaps in some unconscious way she feels that Hamlet and Othello hold her to it, give her re-entrance.'

'The men are attracted to the girl, and she to them, because each seems to lead the other to a country where romance is king and the monotony of life is changed.' Holt stopped and laughed.

‘But I wonder,’ he continued, ‘if it is not always so with men and women. Each lives in a country to the other quite unknown, though we may think we know something of it. Each wants to penetrate into a paradise.’

‘But there is always at the gate a dragon,’ said Warden.

‘A dragon?’ thought Holt. ‘No one is afraid to face a dragon. I wish there was one at the gate I want to enter. But it is more difficult to face an angel, even if she have not a flaming sword. Force will not make an entrance. We must be invited.’ And it looked as though no invitation would come. The girl was with the nuns.

There was in him an irritation against these women. What right had they to hold themselves aloof from men as if more holy? Well, for themselves it did not matter, but what right had they to filch from a man the girl he wanted, to teach her to despise the world? They did not know the world, or they would not despise it. Why did not Mrs. Holman interfere? With their calm faces and their quiet ways these nuns were traps. Yet Mrs. Holman did not notice. Was she blind?

No, Mrs. Holman was not blind. On that last night before they reached Port Said she was thinking of it, troubled in her mind.

At first she had thought the girl attracted towards Holt, then perhaps to Warden, but now it was the nuns. She was often with them, and when not, she was thinking of them. Would she wish to become a nun? If so, why so? If not, why not? There was in her mind no prejudice about religion. For dogma and form she cared nothing. The question did not present itself to her as one of faith, but one of vocation. A girl might marry, or not marry. If she did not, she might live alone, the solitary life that usually comes to women who do not marry, or she might join a Sisterhood. The question lay between the love of man and the love of God. What did each mean?

There came a knock, and Holman entered.

‘Hush!’ said his wife; ‘the boys are sleeping.’

He came and stood beside her. ‘Minnie,’ he said, ‘to-morrow we reach Port Said. We must decide. Are we to take Amitiè with us or send her back?’

‘Why should we send her back?’

‘If we do not, she will want to become a nun.’

‘Perhaps, perhaps. Do not be in such a hurry.’

Because she talks to them and is attracted by them? Who would not be? I am myself.'

'There is no danger for you,' laughed Holman; 'you are protected.'

'And she is not? Well, suppose she should wish to be a nun, what then?'

'Would it not be a pity, such a pretty girl?'

Mrs. Holman smiled at him. 'You are like all men, you see only from your own point of view. She is a pretty girl; she is even beautiful, and men like beauty. They look on pretty girls as birds look on ripe peaches, as made for the eating. You grudge a sweet lost to mankind; what of the peach?'

'Are not all peaches for the eating if they have such a ripeness? I picked a peach once; I think the peach has not been sorry.' He touched her hair.

'Sit down,' she said, 'and listen. You think all women are alike. They are not. You think all women made for men.'

'As men for women.'

'They are not. You think we have no meaning in ourselves?'

'What meaning should either have—alone?'

She looked out through the porthole; on the

sea there lay a tenderness come from the dying day. The long swell rose and fell unbroken. 'Would you have all the world the same?' she asked; 'all men and women made to marry? To the eternal question is there one only answer? Is life then such a dull machine-made thing?'

'Has it proved dull?' he asked.

'You know,' she answered, 'what marriage has meant to us.' She laughed into his face. 'But do you think it is the same for all? Would you make it a matter of course, and so vulgarise and ruin it? Love is a passion and a gift from heaven, a special gift.'

'Not like the rain, that falls upon the unjust and the just alike?' he asked.

'Can you believe it? No.'

'Then it is hard,' he said, 'for those left out.'

'It is not hard. They too may have their sacred fire if they know how to draw it from the heavens. They too may have their happiness. Never believe that only marriage has that answer. You never think so of men. You know that many men are not born to be married. Why should you then think so of women?'

'Man has his work and his companions. He has a meaning even though not married.'

‘And have not we?’ she answered. ‘Is there no place in the world for woman except with man? Have we no meaning? Never believe it, Harry. You hurt me when you say or think I married you because I had to, because I ought to, driven by a necessity, and that God made me so poor a thing that I could not live alone nor find a meaning in my womanhood. I married you because I loved you.’

‘May not Amitiè love?’

‘If she is made to love, she will not be a nun. But if she love not, then it were better to be a nun or any thing in which she may find herself, save her own soul, than lose herself in marriage. The only sanction and excuse for marriage is that love demands it and will not take denial. Marriage in itself, the tying of two bodies and two souls without the heat of love to weld them into one, is a terrible thing. It is not marriage that gives happiness, companionship, children who will inherit the world, but love. The children born of loveless marriages, what are they worth? It is the fire in us that makes the fire in them. And what companionship can there be? Are there not the Grahams to show us that marriage may be a fetter and create a sore?’

‘They loved each other once,’ he said.

‘They *never* did,’ she said ; ‘not in the only way, or they would never be what they are now, an open discord. It wounds me in my heart. Marriage is not a thing to draggle in the dirt. They live together, they are tied together, they were never married.’

‘And the girl ?’ he asked.

‘Leave her alone. If love comes to her then well, but let her be certain first that it is love. Leave her to choose alternatives, so that she be not forced by loneliness into some marriage that is no marriage. Never believe she cannot fulfil herself in other ways, that the world has no use for a woman, that she has no soul but what man gives her.’

Her eyes were dim. The sun had set and the waves dark. Then suddenly there came an after-glow that filled the world again with glory.

CHAPTER XIII

A DULL and turbid sea with little restless waves that tossed uncertainly ; and rising apparently straight from out the water the tops of ugly houses, featureless and new, such is the first sight of Port Said.

The sea is shallow, the Nile mouths on the south empty out sand and mud that turn the blue Mediterranean waters brown. There is no coast apparent. The desert lies so low it does not show, and a mirage shimmers over it that makes one think there must be water underneath. The houses of Port Said, the masts and funnels of the ships might be upon a raft afloat upon a muddy ocean far from land, so little appearance is there of a harbour. There are no trees rising against the sky-line, there is no greenness anywhere suggesting earth and all it bears. Not until the ship gets nearer, and we see the lighthouse and breakwater, do we realise that there is land.

Yet in this muddy sea are many ships coming and going, converging to this one point, or coming thence. The solitude of the great sea plains is gone. This is a water highway, and the mud might be churned up by those that pass, sea dust from the sea roadbed.

A nearer view does not mend matters. The houses are so mean, such packing-cases of gaudy colours, with gaudy names and signs upon them, thrown anyhow upon a sand bank. The harbour is so dirty. Even the statue of Lesseps in these surroundings has no dignity. Set in the middle of the desert, beside the waterway he made, it were a different thing. But at the entrance the Canal is not seen, nor realised, only the bareness, ugliness, and meanness of all the port. And yet Port Said is one of the great places of the world. It is the meeting-place of East and West, of North and South. It stands between three continents, three epochs. It has the keys of peace and war. For it perhaps, and near it, will be fought a new decisive battle of the world.

They stood in a little group upon the forecastle and watched Port Said rise. To none of them was it new except to Miss Ormond, and it filled her with keen disappointment.

‘This is Port Said?’ she asked.

‘This is Port Said,’ answered the Professor.

‘I thought——, I thought——,’ she said.

‘You thought it would look beautiful?’ asked Holt.

‘I thought it would look dignified at least,’ she said.

The Professor shook his head. ‘That is the quality that this age most lacks. It has no dignity, the age, the people, or the things they do. As to Port Said, when I remember how I saw it first, and what has happened since, I seem to see above it, written in the air, “So passes all the glory of the world.”’

‘What did you see at Port Said?’ asked Holman.

‘I was here when it was opened by the Empress of the French. I saw the show, the magnificence; I heard the noble speeches, all the hopes and pride. I saw Lesseps, who seemed himself a prince among the princes. Now——’

‘They all are dead,’ said Mrs. Holman, ‘but one, and she no longer Empress.’

‘To be dead. That does not matter. All will die. It is not death that takes away the glory of the world. Death consecrates it. Had they died

that day their memories would have lived far longer and far otherwise from the way they do. What did they stand for in 1867? "Empress" meant beauty, pride, success, and glory; the greatest woman in the Western world, the dream of a romance. So would she have remained. "Lesseps" spelt courage, genius, and untiring effort, crowned by achievement, integrity, and honour. He was the greatest engineer the world had seen.

'What do their names spell now? Hers brings before us war, defeat, disaster, ruin, flight. We never shall remember her apart from 1870.

'And Panama is written on Lesseps. Suez is all forgotten. And where is Ismail? *Hic transit gloria mundi*, but the failures live.'

'There was another,' said Holman, 'who was great then, who rose to greater greatness afterwards, and who fell and died soured and embittered and undignified though not disgraced.'

'You mean Bismarck,' said the Professor, and was silent.

'We too,' said Holman thoughtfully, 'have not done better. Our two greatest statesmen of that time each ruined his party, and died out of power and discredited. For ability and achieve-

ment our century is perhaps as great as any, but we have forgotten what dignity is like. We have forgotten the way to live.'

'We have forgotten what human nature is,' said the Professor. 'We have forgotten that it is not what we have but what we are that matters and that lasts. We make a science of the body, and forget we all have souls which are immortal. We seek for the applause of crowds and do not gain it, yet to them sacrifice our self-respect. No place presents this as Port Said does, because she is all ours, of our own time.'

They came into the harbour and made fast. Beside her and in front were three great English liners, full of passengers. Small boats came off and clustered at their ladders, the decks were invaded by pedlars, conjurers, guides, touts, paper-sellers. The peace of the high seas was gone.

They went below to breakfast. When they returned on deck, ready to go ashore, they saw an interesting sight.

A great three-funnelled ship was passing. She had come up behind them. Before they entered they had seen her smoke on the horizon, and that she was a big steamer coming fast and gaining on them. Now she was arrived they saw she was a

Russian, one of the Volunteer Fleet intended to be half merchantman, half cruiser. On this occasion she was wholly transport, for her decks were dense with troops going to Port Arthur. They looked strange men, older than troops of other nations, bearded, with grey coats and fur caps.

The steamer went by slowly to her berth farther up the harbour, passing the English liners one by one. Their passengers looked on her silently. she was almost an enemy. For then was the time of trouble about Egypt, when France and England were on doubtful terms, and France was Russia's ally. There were rumours in the air of war impending, of combinations against England, of threats, of preparations to displace her. The ship went on and moored on the other side. The basin of the men-of-war was near her berth, and in the basin there was a French torpedo-boat. Its crew was on the deck, and when the Russian steamer came up to her mooring they cheered her. The Russians answered. For some minutes there was an interchange of cheer and cheer, welcome to welcome. A friend had met a friend, and in hard times a friend is doubly so. Then the cheer died and silence came.

But not for long. Behind the Russian cruiser,

at a few minutes' distance, came another ship, a smaller, greyer, grimmer vessel. She was an English cruiser, and she flew the great white flag of England. Suddenly from the liners came a storm of cheers. It was their answer to the French and Russian. The man-of-war passed on. Her crew stood still upon her decks in discipline. She dipped her ensign in courtly acknowledgment and that was all. England suffices to herself as long as she is true to that within her which made her what she is.

On the *Marchesa* not a word was spoken. Each nationality had its thought, no doubt, but all kept silence. Port Said harbour returned to its ordinary commonplaceness, and the *Marchesa's* passengers went on shore.

CHAPTER XIV

THEY were sitting in the long verandah of the hotel that gives upon the street, and watched the motley throng go by. Truly nowhere in the world are there so many different types in such a narrow area. Almost all nations of the world would seem to provide a sample. There are Western Europeans, bankers or merchants, passengers from the ships ; there are Italians, Greeks, and Levantines. Their face and speech differentiates them, though their dress is all the same. There are Turks and Egyptians with red fezes, Arabs with stately march, negroes with coal-black skins. A Parsee with his hat told of the East, a Chinaman of the yet farther Orient, and all set out upon the background of the fellahin's brown faces and their figures clad in ragged clothes, of donkey-men, of hackney carriages with half-starved horses, clouds of dust and blinding sunlight. The crowd is not a beautiful one ; it has neither colour,

strength, nor purpose, but it is interesting because so varied. At one end of the verandah a conjurer was doing tricks. He brought chickens from eggs, birds from his palms; he grew trees from seed and made them fruit. There, seated on his rug in the bare verandah, with no apparatus and no stage, no help from hidden assistant, his skill announced a supernatural quality. No one could do these things without some hidden power that the West knew not of. His brown, keen face and piercing eyes seemed to affect the judgment.

‘How does he do it?’ asked Othello.

‘By quickness of his hand, and by leading your eyes to look away at something else,’ answered the little Princess.

‘And that is all?’ he said, with disappointment.

‘That is all,’ she said. ‘It is a clever play but I have seen it a hundred times in India.’

‘There is no magic? nothing supernatural, no special power? I thought the East had secrets that we did not know.’

The little Princess laughed. ‘That is your Western way of thinking. You always wish to see some mystery in everything. I saw a conjurer

once in England, an Indian from Madras, who did some of our well-known tricks, the mango tree, the disappearing boy, and others, all clever tricks, but nothing more. Yet the conjurer told them it was all magic. He spoke of odic force, of transmutation, of mystic influences, I know not what. He was a clever man and knew how to interest the West. Had he said they were conjuring tricks he would have made no money. I caught his eye once and he laughed.'

'Was he not afraid you would betray him?' asked Othello.

'No, he was not afraid. He knew no one would have believed me. You want to believe in magic and you will do so. It is an European weakness. Even you yourself do not believe me when I say that it is only quickness.'

Othello almost blushed. 'But you have fortune-tellers in the East.'

'Clever men,' she answered, 'who learn up things beforehand, and who are very quick at guessing from your face and manner.'

'And you all know that it is only guessing?'

'The village people, like simple people everywhere,' she answered, 'are bewildered, and will believe anything, but the educated people are

different. With you, however, it is often the most educated who are most given to magic.'

'You take,' he said, 'all the romance from life. You make it commonplace and dull. It is so with us now, but I hoped in India it was different.'

The little Princess looked at him. 'Romance, romance, what does it mean? There are forces,' she said, 'that no one knows of; there are mysteries that no one has ever solved or ever will. There is the power of the will upon the body, of one will on others; there is sometimes a power to catch from the future a reflection of what is within there. But we do not seek to prove these mysteries by changing eggs to chickens. We do not make religions out of conjuring tricks and marvels. That is your way, not ours.'

To her it seemed an extraordinary thing that people of a great civilisation like the West should not find in it satisfaction. The knowledge and capacity of Europe filled her with awe and wonder. It was an enchanted palace full of genii. They called in spirits who obeyed their call. They tamed the land, the seas, the winds, the lightning. What was there that they did not know and could not do? Yet they were fools. Their spirits were

material ones, and they had sold their souls. But we—— With sudden energy she stopped her unconscious thoughts and looked about her. Who were the 'we' and 'they'? She had lived so long in Europe that she had grown into it, had come to feel it the country of her adoption and its peoples hers. The East she had forgotten. Thinking of it she had despised it, poor, and weak, and ignorant. Her skin might be an Eastern skin, her heart was all of Europe. Yesterday only the West to her was 'home,' its peoples 'we'; the East was foreign. And now, suddenly, she found that she was identifying herself with the East she so despised. Even the fellahin, the Arabs, were nearer her than Hamlet or Othello. She felt at home with them and here; she loved the sun, even the dust, and the people of Europe were become 'they.' Between her and her courtiers, Hamlet and Othello, had suddenly appeared a gulf. It frightened her. She wondered if they too saw it; if they were classing her with the backward East and not the pushing West. Suddenly she became silent. And then, as if seeking refuge from the East that called, she went and took a seat beside Miss Ormond. Would she not give a helping hand back over

the gulf to her own side? If the East beckoned she would shut her eyes. 'Save me,' she almost cried, 'oh save me from myself.' The two girls talked. Othello walked away disconsolate.

A band played every now and then, pedlars came in and tried to sell their wares; there was a constant ebb and flow. Passengers from the ships, followed by men with baskets carrying their purchases, came and drank coffee. What does Port Said produce from out her sand? Nothing. What does she sell? Nougat made in France, Turkish delight from Paris, cigarettes of Syrian tobacco, dates from the Delta in big luscious bunches. Port Said has nothing and is nothing.

'And yet,' said Mrs. Holman, 'there is no place like this. The band is bad, but I remember this is the last that I shall hear till I return again. Therefore the music has a meaning, and I listen to it. To those who go East, this is the last of Europe and the first of Asia. To those who go West, this is the last of Asia and the first of Europe. We change here our skies, our clothes, our minds, and put on new ones.'

'And,' said Warden, 'the strange thing is, that directly we have changed, it seems as if we had never been otherwise than we are. After Port

Said the East becomes the present ; Europe has become a misty memory, almost unreal. Does it in truth exist? The East takes us, and we renew our Eastern habits as if there had never been a break. Just so in coming back. Once in the Mediterranean the East has gone from round us and within us. It seems a dream-life we lived there. The three or four or more years we have been away from Europe counts as nothing, and we continue our European life as if we had never been away.'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Holman, 'and we are vexed and surprised to find our friends are grown away from us, that Europe has not stood still as we have.'

'That is the trouble,' said Holt. 'We live nomad lives. We have no home, no friends, no grip on anything.'

'No friends?' asked the girl.

'No friends. At first we make many friends. We lose them. They leave the station or we do. We make more friends in place of them. They pass. We go to England and make friends there ; we return to the East and they are forgotten and forget us. Then at last we cease to make more friends. We are afraid.'

‘To make a friend,’ said Mrs. Holman, ‘is to give a little of your heart. You cannot go on giving.’

‘Therefore you shut yourself within a shell,’ said Holt, ‘and rarely make new friends. Warden is the lucky man. He has his regiment.’

‘Yet that too changes. Men come and go.’

‘And so at last,’ said Mrs. Holman, laughing, ‘you must marry out of self-defence. You give the tattered remnant to a woman to keep for you, taking in exchange a fresh new heart, unbattered.’

The men all laughed.

‘Is that why Holman looks so young?’ asked Warden.

‘That is the reason.’

‘That is all wrong,’ said Holman. ‘Women take and do not give.’

‘What shall we do?’ said Mrs. Holman. ‘We cannot go on board yet, for the coaling is not finished, yet we have exhausted all the resources of Port Said. We cannot buy more nougat or cigarettes; we cannot ride on donkeys.’

‘We can go off to the cruiser,’ said Warden. ‘I want to go, for I think I have a cousin in her. Shall we all go?’

They walked down through the dusty street

and took a boat off to the cruiser. Warden's cousin was there, and welcomed them and showed them over the great ship. Then in the twilight they took a boat again and rowed back to the *Marchesa*.

They dined in the saloon. When they came up on deck again they were in the Canal.

The West had gone, had faded. All things are taken from us and become portions and parcels of the dreadful past. They were coming into a world where all was different, seas, and skies, and skin, and clothes,—all things were different save our souls. For to the soul there is no East, no West, no North, no South ; for the souls of all are part of the World-Soul that lives for ever.

BOOK II
THE EAST

CHAPTER XV

THE ship passed very slowly through the narrow water. Before her it stretched a ghastly greenish strip lit by her searchlight. The buoys that marked the deeper water swam suddenly into being when the light touched them, and disappeared behind her into the night. On either side there was a wave that followed the ship, washing against the banks with a dull murmur, and beyond the banks the desert.

It seemed to stretch into illimitable distances, mysterious, wonderful in the dim light of a half moon. Strange noises came from it; a jackal barked with mournful cadence, a camel bubbled. And there were sounds born of the night alone, whispers and sighs that drifted up on the night wind. It seemed as if they were the desert's thoughts that passed, her dreams, her fancies, her remembrances. They were the ghosts of

all the things that she had seen through all the ages.

In the silence the girl sat alone, and thoughts came to her out of the night.

The woman and the man are different.

She had never realised it before in all its fulness ; it had not come to her as a certainty, as a thing she knew. For all the life she had lived had tended to obliterate the difference, or rather, to spread over life a crust through which the truth could not show. It had seemed to her, it had been told to her as a new school of thought, that there was indeed no difference that was real. It was all artificial. If women did not do some things so well as men that was because they had not had the opportunity, had never been taught to do them, had been oppressed by man and kept below for his own ends. Given a fair field there was nothing she could not do as well as he could, maybe better. And in the life she had lived, it seemed to her that it might be true. In most walks of life that she knew there were women who had distinguished themselves. There had been women wranglers, doctors, lawyers, scientists, managers of business. That the women were very few, the exception that proved the opposite rule, and the

men many was nothing. Time and education would put that right. Women were men's rivals, and they would be successful rivals. There was not really any difference. Physically even, women could rival men. Men were only the oppressors, the enemies, who arrogated to themselves powers they had not got, and had through all ages kept women down. Well, that time was past or was quickly passing.

Women were emancipating themselves. They were throwing away their chains and opening their prisons, coming into the fresh air. Men were unnecessary, useless, wicked, and their day was past. She had heard and read beautiful prophecies of what the world was to be when women had the guidance of everything, when they had perhaps reduced men to the position women used to hold. Then would be the millennium, the Victory of Women.

And now suddenly from the sight of the cruiser, of the Russian transport, of the French gunboat, from the understanding of the passions that lay below the surface, a new light came to her. The whole futility of the ideas that she had heard came flooding into her mind. Men and women were different, utterly different. She could

not imagine, could not think of a woman's crew on board that cruiser, or of that crew of men obeying a woman's government.

It was true she had seen warships often before, she had even been on board them, she had known sailors. She had known many soldiers too, and seen troops upon parade. But then they had brought to her no thoughts. She had seen, admired, and then forgotten. In private life it did not seem that soldiers or sailors were any different from other men, and therefore no different from women.

But to-day the whole absurdity dawned upon her. The visit to the cruiser, the sight of her guns, her men, their discipline, the purpose in their faces and their manner, had come to her like a revelation. These men were men, and no woman could ever be like them, could hope to be, could wish to be. The foundation of her dream had disappeared. The whole fabric of the world rested on force, and force is man. And she knew that she admired it, loved it, and that it was necessary to purify the world. Yet because her dream had gone an anger took her, and she went to the extreme. Then the old truth was true. The world was men's, and

they were the lords of it. Women were but their slaves. A bitter resentment seized her because she was not a man. Why was she born a woman and a slave?

She sat and stared into the night.

A man sat close beside her. 'It is a wonderful night,' he said, and she knew that it was Holt.

She did not answer.

'What are you thinking of?' he said. 'The desert makes one think. It has no boundaries. It lets thoughts go out into the world.'

'Only into the dark,' she answered.

'What are you thinking of?' he said again.

'I am thinking how unfairly the world is made,' she answered.

'Truly,' he said, 'it seems so. But in what way?'

For a time she did not answer. Then suddenly she asked, 'Have you ever wished you were a woman?'

He was surprised. 'A woman? No.'

'Of course you would not. No man would. Why should they wish it?' There was a bitterness in her voice. 'But many women wish they had been men.'

‘Do they?’ he asked, surprised. ‘Why should they wish it?’

‘Cannot you guess?’

‘I cannot indeed,’ he answered. ‘It is true I have heard women say it before, some women. But I supposed they did not mean it, or that it was only because they were angry with some man.’

‘Yes,’ she answered, ‘that is the sort of thing a man would think. But supposing it is true. Suppose you had been a woman, think how you would feel.’

‘I think,’ he answered, ‘if I had been born a woman I should have been contented.’

‘I am sure you would not.’

‘No one, of course, can tell what he would do in an impossible case ; but why not?’

‘It is so much better to be a man.’

‘That is no answer, even if it were true. It is better, probably, to be a king, or very rich or famous. I am not any of these things. But I am content to be myself. I do not lie awake at nights wishing to be a millionaire. And I do not know that it is true. Why is it better to be a man?’

‘Because you are free and we are not.’

‘I do not see it.’

‘Because you won’t.’

‘Indeed,’ he said sincerely, ‘it is not because I won’t, but because I can’t. I have not, however, thought about it very much.’

‘You had no need’; and the anger in her voice increased. It seemed to him that the anger was twofold—at herself and at him, because he was and she was not a man. It kindled in him a faint amusement, but he would not let it be seen. And he felt sorry for her, because it is no good being vexed with Fate.

‘I daresay I am stupid,’ he answered quietly. ‘Believe me it is not anything else. Will you not explain to me.’

‘Because you are free and we not. You are masters of your destiny, but we are dependent on Fate and you. We can do nothing without you. We are so helpless.’

‘I think,’ he answered, ‘that you exaggerate our power. No man is master of himself or of his destiny, no one. I think you observe only a part of man’s life and not the whole, only the rewards, not the hard work, the discipline, that leads to the rewards, nor the punishments of failures. I do not think that men are more free than

women, it is only an appearance. We are dependent on other men ; we have to go through a discipline you have no idea of. You are always shielded from the world's knocks by men, therefore you do not realise them. We have to take them all through life. When they come through us and touch you, you blame us, as if we caused them. What man is independent? The great majority of mankind are employed in some way or another. They are dependent on their employer. A manufacturer is dependent on his workmen and on the public. A soldier or sailor is dependent absolutely on his commanding officer and on Government. An artist is dependent on a very fickle public taste, all are dependent on Fate. When you say that men are free to make their own lives, you are wrong. They are dependent just as you are. It is a different dependence, that is all.'

'But you are not dependent on women.'

'Not for our livelihood, true, but for everything else.'

'And you earn it.'

'Do not women earn it from their fathers and their husbands? Do they do nothing to deserve it? Is it worse to take it from a man who loves

you, or wring it from a reluctant world as he does?'

She bit her lip. She had not expected this. It made her more angry.

'Besides you exaggerate the rewards. It is women who set great value on money and honour, not men. Men make the money, women spend it. Men earn the honours, women enjoy them. The value men set on these things is only that they may give them to the women. Thus men and women are different, complementary to each other. That which one gains the other takes. Women give care, affection, children, in full value for all they get.'

'It is easy,' said the girl scornfully, 'to depreciate what you have got.'

'You do not think I am sincere?'

'No.'

'Yet it is true. And as to power, it seems to me that if men have power over the natural world, women have power over men, and through them over everything. Nearly all the married men I know are greatly governed by their wives. In India the wives go to the hills, go home, but the man stays and works in the heat alone. Often when men would retire they cannot. They must

make more money, or get some honour for their wives. So they work on, and often enough die.'

'You think them fools because they are married?'

'They tell me I am the fool, that they are glad to do it, and that marriage makes everything worth while.'

'You don't believe them?'

'I suppose, like other people, I only realise what I know.'

'Besides,' he continued presently, 'it is not true that men make the world according to their own ideals for themselves to be happy in. Nothing could be less true.'

'The world is formed and governed by men, but mainly on women's ideals. They try always to make it a place more and more fit not for the strong, who are men, but for the weak, who are women. All great machinery to keep the world quiet and at peace is erected at woman's bidding for woman's use. Men would prefer less law, less peace, more scope for strength and ability, and energy and courage. It is women and priests, their allies, who cry always for that peace that is to put all on to the same level, to elevate the coward, the weakling, the fool to the level of the hero.'

‘A man’s world would be a different place. If he wanted a thing he would be free to try and take it.’

‘Yes, or a woman. He would take her?’

‘He would not take her were she unwilling.’

‘I would sooner be taken than bought,’ she answered. ‘I would respect a man who carried me away, but not a man I had to marry to live. And I should think you would like it better too.’

‘Then,’ said Holt, ‘give the world back to us. It was a better world when there was less peace and talk in it. It was a happier world also for both. And it is not our doing.’

‘If I were a man,’ she said, ‘I would not let myself be governed by women.’

CHAPTER XVI

FAR ahead, low down upon the desert, shone a star. It grew and it came nearer till it was seen to be the light under the bows of an approaching steamer. The *Marchesa* went into a 'gare' and tied up, waiting for it to pass. Slowly it came up, and almost touched her side as it went past. It was all dark on board, and about this stranger passing them so near and yet half seen there seemed a mystery. Out of the night she came, and went again into the night.

Then the *Marchesa* went on again.

The man and girl sat side by side and stared into the desert. They could not see each other, and there had risen between them an antagonism that half drew them to each other and half divided them.

The girl had ceased to argue, ceased to think. Only there was in her a bitterness, a sense of weakness and of loneliness that grew.

The world was man's, and woman could gain it only from a man. That was the bitterness. She could not stand alone. Was there never in the world a place for woman only? In all these stars that shone above her was there none for women? A mute rebellion seized her, all the more fierce because of its uselessness. The tears came to her eyes; she felt a sob was rising to her throat. The man heard a rustle, and he was alone. He did not follow her. Why should he follow? He felt sore. What had men done, what had he done that she should so condemn him and envy him at once? Had men the better part of life?

A week ago he would have said 'Yes' unthinkingly. He did not want to be a woman. He did not wish to be other than he was, and make the best of himself and of the world. Was not the world man's oyster? Could not his hand and brain get for him all he wanted? A week ago he would have answered 'Yes.' And now?

What was it that he wanted? What was the desire that filled his life? that had come unconsciously, unbidden? Was it anything that he could win with hand or brain? Was it money? Was it even fame or honour? None of these

things. Was it woman, even? He paused. Women can be bought sometimes, or won, or carried off. Was it a woman? No!

What then?

It was a woman's love, and that cannot be earned, or forced, or gained. It has no price. It can be given only. Yet that was all the world was worth. She envied him because, a man, he had the world at his feet. She did not understand what was the real value of life, what was that for which if a man offered all the substance of his house it would be utterly despised. It was the love of a woman. And that she only could give to man. Man independent of woman? Was there ever such a folly? If she was dependent on him, he was so on her—and more, and more. What was her loneliness to his?

His bitterness had passed. It broke like a barrier, and a flood of love and pity filled his heart. He looked to see if he could see her. He rose and walked about the decks; but she was gone. The voices of men talking on the farther side jarred upon him, and he returned to where he had been.

‘What is the matter with my young man Selim

that he sits alone and stares across the desert?' asked the Sultan.

The Vizier answered :

'He hath a mystery in his head and in his heart a flame, for it seems he is in love.'

The girl went down towards her cabin. She was tired, almost afraid. The dry, hot air from off the sand strained on her nerves and bound her forehead in a band of iron. The illimitable distances seemed to call to her. She felt as if her soul might go abroad to join the night which called to her. She wanted quiet and four walls to shut her in, that she might return within herself.

But in the corridor she met Sister Teresa. The nun would have passed her by, had half done so, then stopped and took her hand.

'Your eyes look tired,' she said ; 'you are not well.'

The girl murmured something, but did not move. Instinctively she was glad to stay, to feel her hand within Teresa's firm, cool grasp.

'Sister Cecilia, too, is ill,' went on the nun. 'But then she is so delicate, and often ill. I fear this voyage for her, and that it was wrong

to bring her.' She paused. 'Where are you going?'

'I was going to my cabin. I would like to come with you instead. May I see Sister Cecilia? Perhaps I could do something for her—put scent upon her head, or something.'

Sister Teresa thought a moment. 'Yes, you shall come,' she said; 'and you may bring your scent. We poor Sisters do not have such things, you know'; she smiled.

They went together to the little cabin at the far end of the saloon, which Sister Cecilia shared with another Sister. A nun was reading aloud, but stopped as they came in.

'I am so sorry,' said the girl, 'to find you thus.'

Cecilia shook her head and smiled. 'It is not much; and then I am accustomed to be ill. I often have been; therefore I do not mind it as you strong people might.'

The girl sat down beside her and dropped some eau-de-Cologne upon her forehead. Sister Teresa slipped quietly away, taking the other Sister with her.

'But to be ill so far from home, and going to a strange country.'

'We take our homes within us, and there is

no country that God's eye cannot see, none nearer Him nor farther. Do not be sorry for me. Do you not see that I am happy ?'

The girl saw. That was what drew her to the nuns—that they were happy. And yet Cecilia looked so ill, so very ill. Her face was thin and hot ; it burned beneath the girl's cool fingers. A sudden fear, a certainty took her, that the nun was dying, and tears came to her eyes, but other tears than those that came once before that night.

'You think,' said Cecilia, comprehending, 'that I am very ill.'

The girl shook her head, she could not trust her words.

'I also think I am. The doctor says it is but the change, a chill, a fever—I don't know what. But I feel as if it were more than that. I think, perhaps, I shall never see the East, but shall go straight home without that long detour.'

'It is a way of talking,' thought the girl, 'to call death "going home" ; it is an attempt to cover up the fear.'

'It is a truth,' said the nun, divining. 'Some make their homes on earth. They marry ; they have husbands, children. They lend their hearts to this world. They make their treasures here.'

They do as God has made them. God is love. They climb to His great love by little steps, of husband, children, country, the ever-widening circles. We go to the Infinite in a step. So God is very good to us. Therefore we call it "going home." Are we not right? For where the treasure is, there will the heart be also.'

The utter quiet of her voice made music of the words. They put a truth into them that alone they could not hold.

'Tell me,' said the girl, 'what is the true way of life? Is yours the only true one?'

'There is a proverb,' said the nun, 'that says all roads lead to Rome. Each takes the road that opens, and for her that is the only road. So all loves lead to God. To take the love that comes to you, that is given to you, is to take the only true one.'

The girl was silent, thinking. The way to heaven is through love alone. That was a new way of putting it. To be a Sister and to renounce the world was not to cut off love, but to attain a wider one, to go at one step from the finite to the infinite. That was its meaning. Then the lives of Sisters had a meaning, not only to themselves, but to the world. For they kept before

it always the remembrance that there is another love to lose yourself in besides marriage, and another immortality besides that of children.

Cecilia coughed—a painful, hacking cough that tore and wounded.

‘You should not talk,’ the girl said; ‘it makes you cough. And I came here to help you and be kind to you, and not to ask these things from you.’

‘Then let me talk,’ said the nun. ‘You know that from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; and to talk to you makes me realise it all the more myself. It is like showing one’s treasure to some one that we love. You do not mind?’

‘I like to hear you talk,’ she answered. ‘You make all things seem different. To you religion is a love, and that only. It has seemed to me a fear sometimes. If you give up the world, it is not that you love it less, or that you despise it, but that you love something more? I think I should like to be a nun.’

Cecilia shook her head and smiled a queer little protecting smile, as of a mother to a child who asks to be grown up at once. And yet, if anything, she was the younger of the two. The girl saw and coloured.

‘Why should I not?’ she asked; ‘and how should I know?’

‘Sister,’ said Cecilia, ‘no one becomes, or should become, a nun because she wishes to, because she thinks she would like to be so. That is not the way. You do not understand. Consider. Should a woman marry because she wishes to marry, because she thinks that in the abstract the married is the better life, because she wants a home, because she does not wish to be alone? The only real marriage is when love compels her; when a man calls to her, and the call echoes in her heart, and answers to him. Would you have her ask the man to marry her and he indifferent? Would that be a marriage? If not with man, how should it be with God? The real brides of Christ are those to whom He calls and bids them come, and so they must; they *must*. They do not think. They cannot think. A fire devours them, and there is a mist within the brain. If God wants you, so will He call you. And if not, then He has other work for you to do and other love to fill your heart. And do not think one love is earthly and another heavenly. All love that makes you lose yourself is God.’ She laid her hot lips on the girl’s fresh ones. ‘Do not think,’ she

whispered. 'Listen. If it is the mind that seeks, it is the heart that finds. When God calls, you will hear it then. He calls with many voices. The voice which says, "Go to the sick and friendless, to the poor; help them and love them," that is God's voice. The voice that says, "Work hard; cultivate then the talent that you have, for your work will help your family, your nation, or humanity," that is God's voice. And if a man says to you, "Come to me," and you know that you *must* go, that is God's voice also. You surely will hear it if you listen.'

'And if I listen, and I hear it, then?'

'You will be happy. No matter what happens, you will be happy. For you have God within your heart—as I have.'

The nun leant back exhausted. Her soul had come up to her lips to speak, to give its message. And now a weariness came to her, and she almost slept.

Sister Teresa looked in softly. She came up to the girl and laid her hand upon her. 'Come,' she said, 'I think that now you both will sleep. Her restlessness is gone—and yours.'

The girl looked at her comprehendingly.

'How did you know?' she asked, when they

had come without the door. 'How did you know I wanted her and she me?'

'I did not know. I do not know now what she has said to you nor you to her. I do not want to know.'

'Why did you bring me, then?'

But Sister Teresa only shook her head and smiled.

CHAPTER XVII

‘I THINK,’ said Warden, ‘that this Red Sea is making us all fractious.’

He looked across the hard blue sea to the barren hills which raised themselves in staring nakedness into the burning air. They wore not the least semblance of green garment anywhere—no trees, no grass, no bushes. Their flanks were red and yellow, and threw back the light in utter shamelessness; even in their valleys there was not a sign of verdure, only the mauve and lilac shadows that the desert makes. It might have been a world burnt out of clay, with molten china for a sea. And in that furnace blew a wind hot, rough, and dry, that burned the skin, and brought with it a fine dust to hurt the eyes and lips.

‘Holt has become a restless, moody, dull tramp,’ continued Warden. ‘He moves about the deck trying to find a place to be alone in.

If you go near him he glares at you and moves elsewhere.'

'Indeed?' asked Mrs. Holman.

'Yes, indeed, indeed. Do not we share a cabin? He glares at me, however, to such an extent when I go in, that he has frightened me. I dress by stealth now, and I go to bed in fear and trembling. However, he is not the only one. Othello and Hamlet both are mad. They frown upon each other like thunder-clouds. I think, for safety's sake, the Captain should put them both in irons in the hold. Then the Professor——'

'Has it affected him as well? He looks quite happy writing there. He even laughs.'

'That's the worst sign of all. He laughs as the hyæna does that licks its gory lips. He is scathing some one with an article or a review, which he will send home from Aden. He laughs ha, ha, in fiendish glee at every envenomed bite. Your husband——'

'What, Harry too? He is all right, the same as usual.'

'You think so, do you? That shows how little wives know really about their husbands. Had I not intervened he would have utterly

destroyed Graham last night. I threw myself between them at imminent peril to myself. If I escape from this sea safe and sound I shall be surprised.'

'What was the quarrel?'

'A mere nothing. Holt, the Professor, your husband, and I were sitting in the smoking-room; we sat and smoked and drank, not, I must say, in friendliness and pleasant intercourse, but in a strained and violent sort of truce. Still it was a truce, and occasionally some one made a remark, of some ostentatiously simple nature, just so that the silence should not become too unbearable. Some one had just said they wondered if there were any animals in these hills, when Graham entered. He stared about him, threw himself upon a seat, and answered—"Lions"; we all kept silence except your husband, who rashly said, "Nothing but lions?"'

' "Nothing," said Graham fiercely; "what else could live in such a place but lions?"'

' "But then," said Holman, "if there are lions, there must be deer or camels or oxen for them to eat."

' "How could there be?" asked Graham. "What could *they* eat? Do deer eat sand? do

camels browse on rocks? can oxen chew a cud of gravel? There's nothing else."

'Your husband thought a little, then he said : "If you come to that, what do the lions eat then, if there are lions?"

"They are carnivorous, they eat each other," said Graham.

'It was then that I intervened, and rising to the occasion I told your husband that you had sent me to him, and I had forgotten to give the message, though it was urgent. I prayed him to lose no time.'

'He didn't,' said Mrs. Holman. 'He seemed surprised when I said it must be a mistake.'

'The Professor basely followed him, leaving Holt and me to stand the fire. Then Graham let us have it. He warned us bachelors against marriage. He said it was a fraud, an awful do, a trap with iron teeth, a dead-sea fruit. He was as full of images as a cinematograph.

'He said it was a scheme to get a man to work that a woman might do nothing. He said that it was a lottery—all blanks with hardly ever a prize. Before marriage men lived in comfort and in liberty. If they had a house it was their own ; with marriage they surrendered it. She took the

best room for her drawing-room, and the man had to put up with a tiny back room to sit and work and smoke in. She took the best bedroom for herself, the next best for her guests; *he* got a little dressing-room. She took his income, and allowed him at best to keep a trifle for himself. The wife of the working-man drove him from his house, and then blamed him for going to the bar, and tried to get the bars shut by law. She——'

'You ought to have been ashamed to listen to him.'

'You cannot blame us,' answered Warden. 'Holt and I are not married; we are inquirers, humble learners of the mysteries. We hear so much of one side of it from you and Holman, we naturally like to hear the other.'

Mrs. Holman shook her head at him.

'And besides,' he continued, 'you are just as bad. Did I not hear you women listening to Mrs. Graham yesterday while she expounded to you the villainies of man?'

Mrs. Holman laughed. 'She gave us a lecture on the suffrage.'

'Well. Is not that the same? The suffrage! She wants to be a man and become—well, I won't

say what. Heaven made her a woman, she wants to pretend to be a man. You listened.'

'We could not get away.'

'You let Miss Ormond listen, that innocent young girl.'

'She did not listen long. She went away with the Professor.'

'Lucky Professor,' and Warden sighed.

There was a silence, then Mrs. Holman spoke again. Her tone had changed. The badinage had left it, and there was a seriousness.

'They must be dreadfully unhappy. When men and women talk like that, and rail against the world and its necessities, it is because they are unhappy. They have made failure, so they blame the world or marriage, or their sex or men or women and not themselves. They think and say marriage has spoiled them, but it is that they have never known what marriage is. Marriage is union and it is a gift of God. They have thought that it is an institution made by man. They have tried their hands at it and failed. Either the man or woman, or both, were never meant at all for marriage, or it was for marriage with some one else.'

Warden nodded. 'I think it is so. When soldiers abuse the army it is that they are not

fitted to be soldiers. They have made a great mistake in entering. It is so no doubt with other things.'

Holman had come. He heard what Warden said. 'Nothing can be more true,' he said; 'and that is the root of the trouble with the Grahams. He was an excellent soldier and devoted to his work, but she made him leave the army.'

'Why?'

'She has some idea that soldiering is wrong, some dream of universal peace which is only prevented by armies and soldiers. She drove this into him until he left. And he has never ceased regretting it. He has nothing to do, and can do nothing. He is a loafer and hates himself for being so, and she despises him for the same reason.'

'Despising him, the man she thinks she knows best,' said Warden, 'has led to despising all of us, mankind, in fact, and she yearns to take over the world from our mismanagement. Yet her failure with the one man she has influence over might have made her pause.'

'She does not think it is her fault, but his,' said Holman.

‘And do you think,’ asked Warden of Mrs. Holman, ‘that it was his fault or hers?’

‘I think,’ she answered, ‘that it was both. A man’s work is part of him and he must choose it. He is a fool if he lets his wife dictate; she is a fool to try. I would never think of interfering with Harry’s work, or of letting him interfere with my management of the babies.’

‘Did he ever try?’ laughed Warden.

‘He had better not,’ she answered. ‘There is a man’s side of life, and men know it; there is a woman’s side, and women know it. The wise people are those who mind their own affairs in marriage or out of it, and leave the other sex to mind those which Nature gave them. Why should a man or woman marry but that each should bring to the common stock that which the other lacks?’

‘What is the difference then between a man and woman?’ asked Warden, greatly daring.

‘They see the world from different standpoints,’ answered Mrs. Holman, ‘and both are true. A man and woman are as the two eyes that give perspective, roundness, and reality to the view. Neither alone sees the world whole.’

‘Which is the best?’ But all three of them began to laugh.

Marriage is a union of man and woman into one organism, but within that unit both remain—neither is lost, neither is robbed of one particle of his value. Nay more, within the shelter of that unit each gives the more his own peculiar qualities necessary to the whole. So that if man forget he is a man, or woman forget she is a woman, ruin is threatened to the unit and to each component of that unit. The Grahams each forgot that : she invaded a province not hers, and he surrendered. So in a nation there is the male and female. Each has equal value to the whole, each contains its own qualities and virtues. But if women forget that they are women, always women, whether rich or poor, wise or foolish, married or unmarried, seeing life always from the woman's side, with women's strength and women's weakness, and try to invade men's duties ; if men forget that they are men, and that on their shoulders lies the duty of government, then is chaos come. Women and men have lost their value.

‘ Salt is good : but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned ? ’

So, added to the heat, the dryness, and the glare, this trouble between the Grahams made life more difficult on the *Marchesa*. The men liked Graham.

Taken by himself, without his wife, they found him clever, humorous, and, beneath his brusqueness, kind. Knowing him so, they blamed his wife for all the quarrels, and they resented her continual attacks upon their sex. The women liked Mrs. Graham. They were sorry for her. They saw her bitterness came from deep unhappiness, keen disappointment, disillusion. They blamed the man. And so there rose a sex division which grew. It might indeed have threatened all their comfort but for the Holmans. They always made for peace. They laughed and kept their tempers. They stifled all discussion and argument. They took no sides. How could they? Were not they one? How could they lean to either side? The right eye does not fight the left because it sees things differently. The left hand does not hate the right because its duties are not the same. That is what gives each value, that the other is there to balance it. Even the girl felt in herself the strain. It drove her nearer to the nuns. It made their life seem calmer, purer, happier for the ignoble strife of sex about them. They were women, they were free. Could she not be as they?

CHAPTER XVIII

SISTER CECILIA did not mend. The hot air choked her, and she burned in a continual fever. So the girl went often down to sit with her. She heard the Sisters talk, she stayed and joined their prayers, and there grew within her heart a new conception of the faith which she thought hers, but had never understood. Dead formulas that had been only words surrounding nothing, rose into a new life and meaning. Things that had seemed far off came nearer and nearer, words of two thousand years ago became thoughts of to-day, and dreams hardened into reality. It was as if the morning mists had taken form and substance ; had come to her as a real presence, speaking with human voice, touching her with warm and living fingers.

She saw and knew that this faith was a woman's faith. The earlier faith, that which came from yonder burning Mount Sinai, was a man's faith.

It was full of strength, of hardness and revenge, of blood and death ; it was for men, and women had no part in it. Even the sons, the immortality, belonged to the father and not the mother. Before that faith women were nothing save an adjunct to men. It was a great and beautiful faith, and is still true. Every truth endures for ever, but it has others added to it. This later faith stands on the earlier, as woman does on man. And this faith of Christ was woman's faith. How different was it from the former ! The old God spoke in thunder from a mountain, but the new in a child's voice. He was not man's God ; man had no part in Him. He had no earthly father. This God was born of woman, and of woman only, to be a God of woman, to tell of the pity and the compassion that is woman's, to decry all that men hold in honour, to exalt the virtues that women love in themselves. All this mystery of the Virgin birth, which had been before but a vague nothing, became a light to see by. It was by woman that this truth came, and for woman, because it was her own.

A great reverence and love rose in her for this Mother of God, for her through whom God became manifest, who alone had given Him to

the world. In the nun's cabin there was a large photograph of Raphael's great picture, now in the Dresden Gallery, and it seemed to the girl that this expressed the secret of religion. It was the woman, not the man, the Virgin with her Child, Motherhood without Fatherhood, that was the saving of the world. Men were to kneel before it and adore it, as did the Pope in the great picture.

If woman was second to man on earth in this life, was weak and unregarded, it was because the world was wicked, because it was man-made and man-ruled. In Heaven it would be otherwise. Heaven was a woman's Paradise. In Heaven there is no marrying and no giving in marriage.

These thoughts brought to her a new peace, a great comfort, a self-respect she feared that she was losing. Who can respect herself if she thinks her sex is inferior, created to be second to man, whose only chance is to imitate and copy man? Who is there who while saying that they wish to do so, and even do so, does not feel in herself the foolishness, the uselessness? Now a new truth had come to her, she thought. Woman was nearer God, purer, more holy. Had God honoured man as He did woman, then Christ would have

had an earthly father as He had an earthly mother. But it was not so. The whole force of her love and reverence that had been pent up for want of something to rest on, that had made her unhappy because it could find no fitting subject, poured forth upon the Virgin Mother.

She began then to understand the crucified Christ that the nuns wore. She had at first been repelled, had feared this crucifix as a gruesome and unhappy memory. If it was necessary to have a Christ at all and not a Virgin, why not a living Christ, as when He spoke to the children, or a risen Christ, as when He appeared to the disciples? Why this lifeless, tortured, terrible dead thing upon a cross? It frightened her—at first—and then it filled her soul with pity. Suddenly she realised that was its meaning—pity, because pity is the Catholic quality that makes the whole world one. It is woman's Catholic quality, not man's. It is pity for the suffering world—and all the world suffers some time or another—that draws it to a pitying God. And this, too, is a woman's symbol, and not a man's. No man cares to dwell on pain, on suffering, on the aspect of death. Man is the maker; he loves the beautiful, he hates the weak and ugly and inefficient. That

is what binds him to the world—his love of everything beautiful. Unbeautiful things he would away with. It is the love of strength, health, colour, life that he feels strongest. It is pity for weakness, sickness, death that she feels most. His sacred passion which he shares with God is Love ; hers which she shares with God is Compassion. Man has his work ; he has been dowered with qualities to do it. Woman has her work, and in her heart she has her truth. Life is an alternation between the two. Either alone would fail. Men would destroy much good because it seemed to be weak ; women would preserve much evil out of pity.

Therefore the crucifix is her symbol, and not his.

It was not that she realised all this in words, or would so have expressed herself. Nor was she told. The conviction came into her heart slowly, silently, like dawn across the hills, making it beautiful. It was not the uncertain flashing of barren lightning, but the vivifying sun itself, that gives heat and light and happiness. Often now she would sit with the Sisters while they worked or read or were silent, feeling herself in sympathy with them.

‘I think,’ said Sister Teresa, ‘you are beginning to understand.’

She smiled. ‘Do you think I am? What makes you think so?’

‘You look more happy. You used to be vexed, to be troubled about something, were you not?’

‘I used to be foolish. I daresay I am still.’

The Sister smiled. ‘We all are at some time or other.’

‘I did not understand. I thought it was all women’s fate to be married, whether they wanted to or not. It was their only chance in life.’

‘But you did not believe it?’

‘No!’

‘It is the lot of most women. It is a happy lot for those who are fitted for it—to have a husband, children. But all women are not born to it, and ours is happy too.’ She looked up with a question.

‘Yes, I believe it. I know it now since I have seen you; but I was always told otherwise.’

‘That there was no possible happiness for any woman except in marriage?’

‘Yes.’

‘Poor child ! and is that all your Church can do for you ? It is a truth, but only one of many. Is the world so poor, so commonplace, that it has only one way to happiness ?’

‘But why,’ she asked, ‘should it always be religious Sisterhoods that women seek ? Why cannot they join together for friendship and companionship with no religious tie ? Community of interest, will not that do ?’

The Sister smiled. ‘Community of interest ! Will that bind anything for long ? Will it fuse a man and woman into one ? or will it draw women alone or men into communities ? or families into nations ? Never ! Only love will do that wonderful thing. It is a sentiment, a heat that does these miracles. It is not their common interest that makes soldiers into a regiment, but a love to something higher, richer, than themselves—their regiment, their country. Only a love can do it. Find for woman a love outside religion, and you will found secular Sisterhoods. But until then take that you have.’

‘Some things,’ the girl said, ‘in religion are so hard. Why should we give up all the world because of our love of God its Maker ?’

The Sister shook her head. ‘When you are

called you will not think of that,' she answered. 'But you will not be called.' She smiled.

'How can you tell?'

'Look at me in the eyes.'

They looked into each other's eyes. The girl saw down into the Sister's soul as into clearest heaven, so pure, so bright, so full of God's own sunshine. There was never there a thought of earth. She looked into infinity.

The nun looked into the girl's eyes and saw below a human heart. Within it burned a fire that smouldered. It waited for a breath to fan it into flame, to make of it a blood-red star. It was the star that men call love. It burns alone, like those of Salami and Zulamith, until the appointed time.

'You will do,' said Sister Cecilia, 'whatever is inevitable. Only the inevitable is true.'

CHAPTER XIX

THE Professor looked about him and shook his head. The heat troubled him, the sand, the heartless glare of sea and sky and distant land. But his discomfort was physical only. His mind was quite at peace. He was not in love with some one he could not get, he was not tied to some one he wanted to get rid of, he was contented with his sex and way of life. He had a wife and children whom he loved and who were far away. This caused him sorrow, because he felt as if half of him were torn away. But pain, that is only inevitable pain, can be borne with dignity.

If then he shook his head, it was at what he saw, not what he felt. 'The mystery plays deepen,' he thought; 'they run their course. How will they end? What will be the denouements?'

'Already there is some result. One man has ceased pursuit. To Captain Warden it has become

evident he is not in love. Perhaps he always knew he was not. He has realised it, and become a simple spectator like myself, without, however, my acquired knowledge. On the other hand, Holt has realised he is in love, and much dislikes the experience. He finds it painful, sees no chance of any success, and is furious with himself—as if he could have helped it,’ the Professor laughed.

‘The girl is hiding with the nuns. Will she come out, or stay there? The Indian girl is more and more friendly with her lovers. She is like a swimmer who catches at floating things to keep upon the surface. She clings to them because they are the West, and she feels the East is charming her back to itself. In Europe she acquired a Western facet to her soul, and this is struggling for self-preservation. Which will win?

‘The tie that fastens the Grahams is nearly breaking. I think it will be well if it break, or at least stretch a good deal. He yearns for active life again, excitement, danger to rouse once more the man within him. It is his only chance, and hers, that they should each find their sex again in solitude. Even the Holmans are troubled. But that will do no harm. True marriage does not mean that there are no strains upon the unity,

but that the unit can stand them. Theirs will stand. A nun is dying, and all the Sisters are in terror lest she should die before they reach Aden and a priest. Religion'—and the Professor shook his head again—'has but one enemy, and that is priestcraft.

'I think we are unhappy on this ship.'

He half shut his eyes and he began to dream. 'We have,' he thought, 'at our universities professors and teachers of many things. There are professors of rocks and stones, of sand and fossil bones. Animals have their students; insects, fish, and birds. We study languages living and dead, literature, history, medicine, surgery, statecraft; the list is endless. There is but one exception, and that the most important thing in life. Where are the students and professors of love? There are not any. Yet it is love that has made and kept the world. It alone has the key to past, to present, and to future. Therefore we ignore it; we do not study it. It is beneath us.

'It holds the key. Plants, insects, birds, and animals rise in the scale as they perceive the nature of true love and give it power. So is it with the nations. Show me in past or present a nation or a people that has understood it, and I will show

you one that succeeds, one that inherits. But the solution of the problem has no absolute. It is different for different natures, for different ages, different necessities. It has its evolution.'

The Professor got out his memorandum-book and pencil. 'I will make notes,' he said to himself. 'Maybe I will write a book about it some day, or become Love's first lecturer.'

'Darwin perceived very dimly a little of this truth. He made Sexual Selection—what a name!—play a great part in evolution. But he restricted it to mere physical appearance, feathers and such like. How little he observed even the birds and beasts, for all of them have their loves. They, when in freedom, do not mate by chance but by selection, and the attraction is not mere appearance—as far as that goes in domesticity we can control it better. So we raised horses, oxen, birds, and plants that are larger, stronger, more beautiful, but without vitality or intelligence. Turn out all the domestic dogs to seek a living where the wild dog thrives and they would die. The same with all. Vitality, passion, love, that is the secret of survival, not size or strength or even intelligence. So with nations. When nations decay, look at their ideas of love and find the blot.

‘Why did the East decay that once led the world? Because she mated children in their cradles. She stifled love’s selection, and bred up men and women without initiative.

‘Why did Rome fall? Because there were few Romans left, and they degenerate. Rome is most striking proof of all.

‘Why did the Italian Republics rise? Because, again, they found out love. It showed in all their life; it made that great burst of art. My young friend Holt looks for the secret Venice had. That was her secret. Love lit her life—the lesser and the greater loves.

‘The Normans conquered Britain; what was their battle-song? “The Song of Roland.”

‘What was the secret of England’s strength in the spacious times of Great Elizabeth? It was Love. They were Love’s children who burst forth and conquered, who wrote and sung, who lived and died.

‘Look at England to-day. Alike in her Church, her State, her Society she has made a fetish of marriage. Therefore her population has increased beyond all reason, flowed over into the spare places of the earth while it could, and now presses on her resources. Her great men have disap-

peared. Great sons and daughters are born of great passions, not of a commercial morality. Her people are become a fair average and nothing else. She is decadent because love makes hope, and love she has despised. She has said to her sons and daughters, "Marry, marry, marry!" She ought to have said, "The only excuse for marriage is love. If you do not love, then do not marry." She should have made life happy for her sons and daughters who did not marry. But she has despised them. The men can get along in a way, because their work brings them into touch with the world. But what of the women?

'Is woman nothing in herself? has she no quality to the State, the Church, Society? The English State says "she is nothing"; the Church says "she is nothing"; Society puts her aside. It is not so in wiser countries or in wiser times. That is the sentiment of Judaism to which Protestantism is a reversion. A Catholic Church knows better. It organises Sisterhoods of all kinds to enable woman to remain single and yet be happy, and have companionship, the wider sympathy and knowledge, to cultivate her own gifts in safety, to exercise her due influence in State, Society, and Church. It supplies the tie of sentiment that binds

women together, which gives them force, freedom, happiness. The English Church, not Catholic but National, not Christian but Jewish, cares nothing for them. It has no belief in men or women unless they are married. Its priests all marry. It does not recognise that the State, the Church, the world wants unmarried men and women as much as it does married couples; that they have their talents also. It does not see that the world does not want the children of conventional marriages. It has not seen that as the State is Man, the Church is Woman. No wonder that the women at last rebel. They have a grievance, ay, a bitter one. God help them !

‘ But the escape is not by pretending to be men, by denying their womanhood, by substituting one falsehood for another. They should have influence in the State, but not gained at such a loss.

‘ My Germany perhaps is following in England’s steps. Germany was the most sentimental of nations, now it is the strongest ; cause and effect, cause and effect. If it become material it will fall. This world is Love’s kingdom—and the next.’ The Professor laughed cheerfully. ‘ What a book I will write. All of it will be true. No one will believe. Yet the Churches ought to

know. They keep always saying the formula that Love is God and God is Love, and then interpreting all sense out of it.

‘My friend——’ it was Holt who passed and stopped.

‘What is the matter, Professor?’

‘Why move about so restless? Come and sit down. Behold, here is a good cigar. I write a book and I want information.’

Holt sat beside the Professor. ‘And can I furnish it?’

‘Perhaps. Tell me, have you discovered what is the secret Venice had?’

Holt looked surprised. ‘No,’ he answered. ‘How should I? We have left Venice behind. How should I find her secrets in the Red Sea?’

‘Shall I tell you?’

‘Yes, if you know.’

‘I know. The secret is simple, that of love under all its great and true aspects. Men loved their wives and wives their husbands with a passion of body and of soul. Men loved men and made societies, women loved women and made sisterhoods. They loved the State. They were religious, for they knew that the secret of religion, too, is love—that of humanity. They were

not afraid, because they knew that when man loves, nothing can hurt him, even death. Is not there somewhere a song to that effect ?’

‘You mean,’ asked Holt, ‘the Song of Solomon ?’

‘Perhaps, my friend, you may be able to give the passage in the English version. I want it for my book.’

How did the old Professor guess that Holt had read that passage lately, ay, and others too of that same song ; or perhaps Holt had not read, but merely had brought up what his heart needed ? Was the Professor qualifying for the new Professorship ?

Holt laughed. ‘Perhaps you mean, “Love is strong as death. . . . Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it : if a man give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.”’

The Professor nodded. ‘I like your English text,’ he said. ‘And now, tell me, is it not true ?’

‘That love was the secret Venice had ?’

‘Not Venice only, but every man and woman, every city, every nation that has come to happiness, to success, to immortality.’

‘Venice died ; why did she die ?’

‘What does it matter to die? We all must die, men and nations all. But we shall be born again, those of us who know what love is. We shed old fleshly garments and put on new robes. As long as love remains then life renews itself. For love is life and immortality.’

Holt said, ‘How did you find that truth, Professor?’

‘How do you know that what I say is true?’

How did he know? But first to be answered was the question, did he know that what the Professor said was true? Yes, he knew. Then how did he know? How did the certainty come to him? Not out of thought or study. His mind had sought, but his heart it was that found. They both were silent. The Professor’s thoughts went back. How had he himself learnt it? Out of books or lectures, out of thoughts or dreams? No, but from blue eyes that had looked into his, from lips which did not utter words, from hands that did not write. And the knowledge went on growing always. Holt was silent for a time, then said :

‘You say, Professor, that the world should follow Love. Therefore each man and woman should do so.’

‘Of course.’

‘What if he cannot? If he love, but his love be not returned?’

The Professor laughed again—not loudly, but with a mellow rumble of amusement and of gaiety.

‘And *still* you do not understand,’ he said. ‘You think love is of one person. It is not. Love is a heat between two. It is the result of both acting on each other. Action and reaction are always equal.’

‘It does not appear so always.’

‘It always does appear so to those who have eyes to see. No great and real love was ever unreturned. It could not be. But the manifestation in each is different.’

‘As different,’ said Holt lugubriously, ‘as the equator and the pole.’

‘Just so,’ said the Professor, and made no further answer. But as Holt was going away he asked :

‘What of the book I lent you, *Primitive Marriage*? Did you read it?’

‘No, I did not read it ; you told me it was no good.’

‘I never said so,’ the Professor remonstrated.

‘It is most valuable. I told you to read and disbelieve.’

‘You mean, believe the opposite of what he says? Well, I will go and do so. This Red Sea makes disbelief in anything quite easy. I can hardly believe there ever was a Europe.’

‘Or that there ever will be Eden, eh?’

‘Do you mean Aden? We shall get there to-morrow, I believe.’

CHAPTER XX

As they drew towards the end of the Red Sea the heat grew worse. They seemed to be within a reverberating furnace, where the heat came back from roof and wall and floor, from sea and sky and mountain. A hot wind blew from off the desert, a sirocco whose fevered breath penetrated everywhere. You could not get away from it; on deck or in the cabin there was no peace. It moaned among the rigging. With all the fury of the wind there was a breathlessness as if there was no air to breathe. There was a band about each chest and forehead like an iron ring.

The sun set in a crimson rayless ball that had no light, but only suffering; when it disappeared the night brought no relief. The darkness closed upon them, the furnace door was shut.

All day Sister Cecilia had been dying. The hot wind drew the life from her as from a flower, and when the dark came she grew quickly worse.

She had been moved from her small cabin to

the hospital, a larger room with portholes opening forward, and a skylight on the deck. But they were all closed, for the wind blew in at every opening, bringing its heat and sand and misery. An electric fan moved the close air to and fro, but the heat was great, and the beat of the engines shook the room. The doctor came and went and came again, but he could do nothing. Death's hand was on her—not cold, but hot and burning, her eyes were lit with fever, and her cheeks were flushed. Sister Teresa knelt, and with infinite tenderness looked on the dying girl. Teresa's face was calm, her eyes serene and confident, while in her heart there lay a terror. It was a terror worse than death, a helplessness that nothing could succour, a hopelessness that saw no light of hope. She held before the sightless eyes a crucifix.

The girl was dying, passing from this world to that which is beyond. Her consciousness had gone before, her speech had ceased, her soul was fluttering on her lips, and in a moment she might pass. Never another dawn, never even another beat of the ship's bell that rang the hours, would come and she be here.

Sister Cecilia, whither art thou going ?

Without, in the corner of the deserted saloon, the other Sisters knelt. They could not help except by prayer. One of them was going into the unknown. She went alone. They could not go with her. And with them sat the girl. They let her come and sit with them, and watch till the end came. When others had come and offered help, or wished to speak, they shook their heads in silence and motioned the inquirer to go away. But the girl was different. She could stop, and watch and grieve and pray with them. We admit every one to our joy, but we keep our sorrows sacred and concealed. We share them not with all, but only with those who understand. For in their hearts too was a fear—not fear of death, but worse ; because there was no priest, no priest.

Sister of mine, thou passest, whither dost thou go ? Thou goest all alone into the dark. There is a way for souls that leads through dark to light, but canst thou find it all alone ? and canst thou tread so narrow and so difficult a path without a guide ? and will they let thee in all unconfessed and unassoilzied into the light where every speck is seen ? Sister of mine, would that I could go with thee ; would that thy sins would stay with me, and thou go free.

There was no priest, no priest.

They knelt, their faces in their hands, and through their fingers dripped salt tears. They murmured prayers that sounded like an echo to the waves that washed the ship. Their great distress entered the girl's soul too. She knelt with them and she prayed.

Sister of mine, thine eyes are dim, yet canst thou see the cross, the God upon the Cross. He died for thee, for all of us, and He will lead thee. He will come Himself if He knows that none of His servants can come to thee. Canst thou not feel Him here? In the gloom that gathers are there not lights, His eyes that look to thine? Is there not a hand that closes on thy hand and leads thee?

Sister Teresa's prayer went upward to the heaven. There was no priest, but God is God. She poured her hope, her urgent summons up to the gates that He might hear and come. She willed that God should know. Surely the Bridegroom Christ would not forget His bride who came to Him, who would be lost unless He heard.

Her wedding night was come, the bride was ready. But one thing lacked—there was no priest, no priest to join Christ and His bride.

The hot air fluttered to and fro, the engines throbbed unceasingly. Their sound became an agony that pressed into the brain. They throbbed and moaned and cared not. What was life or death to them?

The end was very near. The nun's lips opened and her eyes grew brighter. Teresa held the cross still nearer to her.

'Oh that I were a man, a priest,' she sobbed, 'to give that which no woman can give.' She felt her weakness. 'Had I been a man I would have been a priest, and this my sister would have gone to Heaven in shining robes of sinlessness. Can she meet Christ without a wedding dress of purity? But I am only a woman.'

Cecilia's eyes opened still wider, a smile came on her lips and she was dead. Her soul had passed into the night, and Teresa sat there solitary beside the dead.

For a while she sat, stunned with her sorrow, unknowing that the end had come. Then suddenly there came to her a sense that she was all alone. Her sister had gone from her. Within these four close walls there was no other life but hers. She rose and went into the outer cabin, and dropped upon her knees beside the others.

They prayed, and sobs mixed with their prayers. The sobs became a passion that drove through all their hearts, a storm that swept across a midnight sea. There was no light, no hope ; no stars shone on that sea, the clouds hung low and touched the waters.

The passion calmed itself and they knelt there in silence.

.
'My dear, my dear,' said Mrs. Holman.

'Sister Cecilia is dead,' said the girl.

'I know, I know ; but you must not stay here. It is so late.'

'I did not think of it.'

'Come now with me. There is nothing you can do, and you want rest.'

She passed her arm round the girl's waist and lifted her. The nuns took no notice. They knelt, and their prayers went up unceasingly.

'I did not know that you cared for her so much.'

'It is not that,' replied the girl.

They passed along to the girl's cabin and entered there.

'What then is it ?'

'She died without a priest.'

‘Is that so great a matter?’

‘They say perhaps she will not get to Heaven. Perhaps she is now in Purgatory, to wait who knows how long.’

‘Because she had not a priest to confess her and give her absolution?’

‘Yes. Do you think that it is so?’

‘I do not know. How should I know? I think they are mistaken. I am sure no Church would say such a terrible thing. I am sure if any Church said so it would not be true. The keys of Heaven are in God’s hands, not man’s. Do not trouble, Sister Cecilia has gone home. For Heaven to her will be no strange or unknown place, but home.’

The girl was silent, she was not undeceived. It was not the religious dogma that troubled her. It was another matter. She had thought that in the nun’s life she had seen a way in which women could fulfil themselves alone without men. They were sufficient to themselves, and if women could be so as nuns, why not in other ways of life? It was not that she had wanted herself to be a nun, that she had been drawn to them, but because to her they disproved the saying that was always being thrust upon her, that to women man

was a necessity. They had seemed to live without men in their own purity and strength. And now she had suddenly realised it was not so. If they had so lived it was partly because of the priest, because of his teaching, guidance, care. They had not lived without men, nor could they die without one. The world was always man's.

And from the girl's silence the older woman felt that she did not understand.

'Let us talk,' she said. 'It is too hot to sleep just yet, and you are too troubled.' So in the dark they talked, and in some way the girl made her understand.

'They are both men's worlds,' she said ; 'this and the next. They keep this by their strength, the next by their priestcraft. We cannot escape from them.'

Mrs. Holman shook her head and smiled. 'Neither this world nor the next is man's or woman's, but both worlds belong to them and us. They cannot do without us, nor we them. Are not half the virtues ours and half the strength? And have they not the other half? In this world we live as separate entities, man and woman, and even then neither can do without the other. In the next——'

They climbed the stairs and came out on the deck. The wind had ceased, the sea was still. The ship passed through a narrow strait like a broad river. It was the Gate of Tears. Before her lay the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. A silver dawn was in the east, a light so clear, so wonderful, it seemed a promise made of Heaven.

‘And in the next,’ she said, ‘there will never be a question of marrying or giving in marriage. There will not be in Heaven either woman or man. Man cannot enter there, nor woman. We must be perfect man and woman in one soul before we enter.’

CHAPTER XXI

THE heat had somewhat lessened, the hot desert wind had ceased, and a fresher breeze blew up from the Indian Ocean that lay beyond the Gulf. But the sea and sky were still the same hard blue as if made from china, and the coasts on either side were barren, hot, and dry. There is a Gate of Tears between sorrow and happiness, but still the change is gradual. You do not leap at once from one to other. Their influences extend beyond their proper boundaries, and die but slowly.

Holt sat reading on the deck. He read a legend of a garden planted upon that coast in the beginning of the world. Who wrote that legend? No one knows. It comes from out the misty past to us, and no one knows who fashioned it then in the childhood of the world. He was some genius, and he had seen truth.

Is that legend true? Can it possibly be other

than true? Could it have come to us through all these centuries had it not held a truth that is eternal? It has a soul that lives. Its form is dead and of the long dead past, its imagery has faded. No one seeks now with map in hand to find that garden, and its name, given to a rocky barren headland on that coast, is but a mockery and a laugh. But its truth, its soul lives on. It is as true to-day as when it first arose. For truth is always true. New truths arise upon the old; new courses are added to the pyramid that rises ever to the heaven. But the old truths remain. They are the base on which the new truths rest. Did they crumble, then would the new fall into ruin also.

He read :

‘The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.’

It is a parable of life. So is the world to every man that is born into it. It is a garden fair with fruits and rivers, with pleasures of all kinds. He is the king. It is for him to eat these fruits, to

drink the water, to enjoy the garden. Life is before him and the world ; he will make the best of it. He eats all that he wishes. He does not care to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. He does not think of it. He does not care for knowledge, only for life. And besides, he thinks that he has knowledge ; he gives names to things, and that is knowledge. So it seems to him.

Yet he is lonely. Then he discovers woman. As God made her and brought her to Adam, so does woman come suddenly into the life of man. Adam and she are friends, companions. But love was not, nor knowledge. The man, maybe, would so continue all his life. Adam was content. It was not to him the serpent spoke, but to the woman. It was not Adam who felt the emptiness and ignorance of life within the garden, it was Eve. He was afraid, perhaps, of death. She was not. She thought death would not come, or if it did, the penalty were not too great. She listened when the serpent spake. He said : ‘ Ye shall not surely die : for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.’ ‘ And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the

eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her ; and he did eat.'

She asked for wisdom, and she received love. So began the dawn of love that spreads and grows to a more perfect spiritual day. So began the world to live, to love, to hate, to die. So began hate ; for to love the good is always to hate the evil. So began death ; for to live is also to die.

She gave to Adam and he ate.

It is the woman always who holds the man the fruit. She does not know its meaning, she does not know what power it has on those who eat it. She looks for wisdom, and she makes the man seek wisdom also. They sought for wisdom with their minds ; they found out love within their hearts.

It is the parable of man and woman. It is as true to-day as when that ancient legend first took form upon the lips of men. It will be true as long as man and woman and the world endure. 'The woman tempted me, and I did eat.'

Love and wisdom are the same. It is only love that opens our eyes so that we see and understand. So began love within the garden ; it was

cast outside, and there grew greater. The love of man to woman, of woman to man, that is the beginning, that is the great foundation on which is built the pyramid that rises to the heavens. The love of man to woman, of woman to man, the love of children, the love of country and humanity, the great love that holds the universe in one,—such are the steps each built upon the other, the higher resting always on the lower course. We build upon the earth, and rise towards heaven ; without the lower, how shall we have the upper course ?

That was the first truth. For no one knows how many thousand years the world lived and progressed in that truth alone. They sowed, outside the garden, seeds of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and all the world has eaten of it. So every man who loves a woman has been given of that fruit, and every man who has acquired wisdom has done it through love. They are the same for ever.

But what of death ? For God had said : ‘ Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat : but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it : for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.’

So had God said, yet they had eaten. And though desire may quench the fear of death, yet that fear returns, and every one must pay the penalty. So death will come.

But no ; there was another tree. Beside the tree of the knowledge of good and evil grew the tree of life. And it was not forbidden. True, they had not desired it. Not till the fear of death is come does the desire for life arise. It is fear that brings hope behind it. Adam and Eve were full of fear, and said, ' Where then is the tree of life, that we may eat ? '

But no, not yet. The time was not yet come.

' The Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil : and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever : therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So He drove out the man : and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.'

Not yet, not yet. They have one love, they must wait and make the most of that ; they must fear death until they learn a further truth.

And then, at last, there came into the world One who put aside the flaming sword and passed into the garden, who plucked the fruit from the tree of life and gave it to the world. What is that fruit? It is compassion, pity. The fruit is bitter to the taste. Yet when you have eaten of it you have learnt that which no love can teach, that all the world is one. For love has hate, but pity has no shadow.

‘I think,’ said Graham, stopping near Holt and pointing, ‘that Aden is over there. We should be in by three o’clock or so.’

‘Yes. That is what the Captain said. I suppose you will go ashore?’

‘Of course,’ said Graham. ‘Aden is not a pleasant place. It is a barren rock, with sand instead of grass. It is a dreary, hot, and horrid hole. Aden! I think that Hell would be a better name. If that was once the garden where Adam lived with Eve, it must have changed somewhat.’

‘Of course it changed,’ said Holt. ‘Were not Adam and Eve turned out?’

‘And the garden was burnt up,’ said Graham. ‘It served it right. It was a sorry trick Eve played on Adam there. It would have been more

kind and just to turn Eve out and leave Adam in the garden. But that is always the way. They do the things, we suffer for them.'

Holt laughed. 'I daresay Adam would have escaped and followed Eve.'

Graham looked at him. 'Perhaps he would. There is no end to the folly of men about women. "The tree of the knowledge of good and evil." The good is little and is soon learnt, but the evil we keep on learning all our lives. That fruit she gave was the dead-sea apple, pleasant to look at, but in the mouth as ashes.'

'If Aden is so bad,' said Holt, 'why go ashore at all?'

'Because,' said Graham, 'after this ship even Aden will be an Eden. There will be room at least to turn ourselves and stretch and have some sense of freedom. Shall we be able to sleep ashore?'

'I doubt it. Probably we shall sail at midnight.'

'Well,' said Graham, 'I want to sleep ashore, to have a bed and not a bunk, to have a room and not a cabin, to have some air that does not smell of oil and engines. I shall take a bag ashore and hope for the best.'

‘It will be posted in the saloon before we land what time we sail.’

‘I know that game,’ said Graham. ‘They will say the ship leaves at midnight. You come on board and find a new notice that you sail at dawn. At dawn you learn that you will sail at ten. Finally, you get off at noon.’ He nodded sagely. ‘To-morrow you all will envy me.’

‘You will be left behind.’

But Graham only laughed. ‘Are you going ashore?’ he asked.

‘I think so, in the evening when it is cooler.’

‘To look for apples?’

‘You forget that it was Eve who found the apple and not Adam.’

‘Then man was innocent. But nowadays men look for apples too, and find them. Are the Holmans going ashore?’

‘I do not know. I think that Holman is, not Mrs. Holman.’

‘And Warden?’

‘Yes. We go together.’

‘Let me tell you something. Have an eye on Hamlet and Othello if they should go ashore.’

‘Why, what should they be up to?’

Graham shook his head. ‘They are not

friendly. There is a bitterness between them. Perhaps the fruit the steward gives us is not ripe, and sets their teeth on edge. They may have indigestion.'

'What does it matter if they have?' asked Holt. 'It does not kill.'

'It does sometimes,' said Graham, 'or makes one wish to.'

Then he walked away.

Yes, love means hate also, and yet take love from out the world, and what is left? What is there left of Eden but bare hills?

A promontory stretching into the sea, whose sides are rock, whose feet are yellow sand. There is not a green thing anywhere save a few palms. From sea to crest is but a burning waste of rock, and beyond are other hills as bare, as barren. The sun beats on them and rebounds from them, echoing and re-echoing, heat and light that burn and sear. There is a carnival of sunlight, for it has no enemy and no foil. It is an appropriate end to that Red Sea and outer gulf of which it is the key, a barren key to such a barren sea. Its bareness, quaintness, its untempered glare affect one like a sense of sin.

The ship came in and anchored.

· CHAPTER XXII

OTHELLO rose, and going to the entrance of the verandah looked into the street. The sun was getting low, a crimson ball that hung above the hills, the evening stillness was approaching. Over the roads the dust hung like a pall that the sun turned into crimson, and the sea was still. The heat seemed worse than ever, but there was a promise that the day was nearly done, that night was near with coolness, rest, and peace.

He paused a moment, then he looked back over his shoulder to Hamlet sitting all alone. Hamlet was watching, saw Othello toss his head backward and walk out. Then Hamlet rose and followed him.

They went thus down the road towards the harbour, turned and made along the sea towards the point. Othello kept in front and Hamlet followed at a distance. The heat burned them, the glare enveloped them, carts came by and

cast a choking cloud of dust upon them, but they kept on.

They left the town and followed the sea as closely as they could. They climbed over the stones and threaded their way amid the rocks. Sometimes they looked to see that no one followed; once or twice Othello stopped, looked round, saw some one, a coolie passing or a boat too near, and went on again. The sun sank lower.

At last Othello stopped in a small ravine. It seemed deserted. Even the harbour was quite hidden, for they had turned the point. Hamlet approached and they stood face to face.

‘Are you ready?’

‘Yes.’

‘Which of us gives the word?’

‘I do not care. You do it. We ought to have seconds; but what matter?’

Each drew a pistol from his pocket. Hamlet stepped back ten or twelve paces and then turned.

They were about to fight—for what? Had you asked either of them you would have got no clear answer. They had quarrelled, they hated each other. They wished to fight to ease an overcharged brain, as a storm-cloud bursts that peace may come again.

They fought about a girl, the little Princess ! Had you put it to them so, they would have stared at you and wondered. So it began, no doubt, in rivalry, but that was long ago, or seemed so. She had been kind to both, she had encouraged both in all innocence. Perhaps she had not learned to choose as women do in other countries, but left herself to be the prize of war or the sport of Fate. Or perhaps, more truly, she only talked to them and clung to them because she felt herself drifting back to that deep sea whence she had risen.

And they ? They had quarrelled, they were about to fight. For what ? Because they wanted to. Is that not sufficient reason ? And is there ever in this world a better ?

They faced each other. Hamlet counted loudly and clearly, 'One, two, three.' There were two cracks, two bursts of flame. Othello stood unhurt, and saw as in a dream that Hamlet staggered and fell down.

Still he did not move. The whole world had become unreal. The sunset fading in the west, the shadows that crept forth from out the hills, the placid sea, the little stretch of sand, and Hamlet lying there, were phantoms, dreams, him-

self a dream within them. His real self, his thoughts, his will, his consciousness of self, where were they? Gone out of him as when a man is sleeping.

A shout aroused him. A man was coming down the rocks. 'I am too late,' thought Holt; 'I let them get away from me.'

'Hallo!' he called. 'Have you had an accident?'

As when a sleeper is wakened Othello's consciousness now came back with suddenness. It came as in a flood. He understood at once all that had happened; its folly, its fatuity, its uselessness, and yet its inevitableness overwhelmed him and astonished him. Why had he done this? Had he done it? Was it he? And was that Hamlet?

With a sudden jerk he tossed his pistol far into the sea and ran to Hamlet. A cold fear clutched his heart.

But Holt had reached Hamlet first, and stooped down to see where he was wounded, fearing that he was dead. To his surprise he found Hamlet's eyes wide open, almost as if he waked from sleep.

'Where are you hit?' asked Holt.

Hamlet looked at him wonderingly but half understanding, and did not answer. Holt put

his arm about him and raised him up. Then was evident a mark along his forehead and the side of his head, where the bullet had grazed past. A few drops of blood fell from it.

‘I think,’ said Hamlet doubtfully, ‘I have been wounded in the head. I felt a pain, and suddenly turned giddy.’

‘It is nothing,’ said Holt. ‘Stand up,’ and he helped him.

Othello looked at him dumbly.

‘You are all right,’ said Holt. ‘An awkward accident. Lucky it is no worse.’

‘An accident,’ said Hamlet, understanding. ‘I shot at birds—I slipped.’

‘Just so,’ said Holt gravely; ‘an accident that might occur to any one.’

Hamlet picked up his pistol, looked at it. ‘A stupid thing,’ he said, and threw it in the sea.

‘Come, let us go,’ said Holt; ‘it is growing dark. We must be getting back. A pleasant stroll here by the sea?’

They did not answer. Othello drew next to Hamlet and they walked together. Holt wondered should he separate them. But no. The storm had passed.

They walked back almost silently. Othello

suddenly finding his voice declared that he was hot, and that was all. They came down to the harbour just at dark.

‘Are you coming on board?’ asked Hamlet.

‘Not yet,’ said Holt; ‘I dine ashore. And you?’

They shook their heads. Holt watched the boat put off, and when it had gained a little distance he saw the two were talking eagerly.

‘They are good friends,’ he thought. ‘And all goes well. Love turns to hate, and then to love again—another love—so all goes well. But it nearly ended ill. I was too late.’

He strolled back to the little club beside the harbour that offers hospitality to passengers. He found no one there. The verandah was all dark. He sat and thought. Something had made his thoughts go faster and his memory keener. ‘Love carries hate with it,’ he thought. ‘It is its shadow. Whom shall I hate?’ He laughed, for time would show, and presently he heard a man come up the steps; he came into the verandah and stood against a post, leaning out. His figure was outlined against the glow that held the sky, his face could not be seen. But Holt knew that it was Warden, and he remembered.

He rose and went to him.

‘Hullo!’ said Warden, wondering who it was.

‘Hullo!’ said Holt. ‘I have remembered. Twenty years ago and the corner of a field beneath some trees—a fight.’

‘Has it taken you all this time?’ said Warden. ‘I remembered long ago.’

‘How long ago?’

‘Do you remember the second night on board? We had a talk.’

‘We had,’ said Holt; ‘you came to me. We made a compact. Did you know then?’

‘Yes, I knew then.’

‘Why did you not tell me?’

‘Let us sit down,’ said Warden. ‘Let us recall what we remember. We were boys together, we were friends, we quarrelled.’

‘What did we quarrel about?’

‘I have forgotten,’ said Warden.

‘And so have I, but I remember it was bitter.’

‘Yes, it was bitter; so we fought.’

‘You won, I think.’

‘The fight was pretty equal, I should think. I know we neither of us could appear at class for days.’

‘And then you left.’

‘And then I left. We had not made it up, at least openly. We did not meet again for nearly twenty years, and then as friends.’

‘As friends.’

‘At first I could not remember any more than you could. It was the girl’s being there that recalled it to me. You wanted her, I wanted her. I felt beginning to be angry. The anger made me remember.’

‘I was never inclined to be angry with you,’ said Holt.

‘You had no reason,’ answered Warden. ‘You were the favoured from the first. I felt it by some instinct. You were in my way, not I in yours. Within her heart she wanted you.’

Holt looked at him. ‘And was that why,’ he asked, ‘you came and made that compact, so that we might keep friends through all? You are a wiser man than I. I did not want to make it.’

Warden laughed. ‘I wished to keep friends with you; I wished, besides, to have a little share in what was going. I knew that the girl would not care less for you because you did not take her whole attention. I liked to see her and to talk to her. I even thought then that I might do more if she allowed me. She did not.’

‘And then?’ asked Holt.

‘I learned as I have learned before that I am not made for marriage. I am a soldier. I have all I want. My regiment is my mistress. And no man shall have two.’

‘Truly?’ asked Holt, trying to see him in the dark.

‘Yes, truly.’

‘You are a wiser man than I,’ said Holt again.

‘Perhaps this time,’ said Warden. ‘Because you had a reason to be jealous. You were in love, I was not. I only thought I might be, and was not. You thought you were not—did not wish to be—and were.’

There was a silence.

‘And besides,’ continued Warden, ‘you were always rather a dreamer, you know. You looked so far ahead, you used to see things out of sight and did not see those before your feet until you fell over them.’

Holt pondered. ‘Do you mean I am like that now?’ he asked.

And Warden laughed. ‘Like that now? Why, you are worse than ever. You will not stretch your hand to take what is yours already.’

‘It is not mine,’ said Holt.

‘Fruit must be picked,’ said Warden.

A servant came in and lit a lamp. The light brought with it a return to outer things—from thought to sight, from past and future to the present.

Holt remembered the scene he had been at, the almost tragedy upon the shore. He told of it, and added, ‘I think that they were friends again as they went on board ; but will they continue so?’

‘Why not?’ asked Warden.

‘The little Princess. They will find her there, and their quarrel will reopen.’

‘I think not,’ answered Warden. ‘I think they have forgotten her, or even worse, you will find they hate her.’

‘Why?’

But Warden shrugged his shoulders. ‘How should I know? It is so always. If a girl, consciously or unconsciously, makes two men hate each other, they will hate her too. I don’t know why. It is so.’

‘Perhaps,’ said Holt, ‘it is Nemesis.’

‘Sit down and analyse it if you like, but that is not my line. I know the fact. Suppose you and I had quarrelled about the girl—we might

have done so—we should have certainly ended by quarrelling with her. If two men fight a duel to get a woman, does she ever fall to either or survivor? Never. They hate her and she them. Women are not the reward of fighting; their bodies may be, not their hearts. They will not be won in such a manner. Probably that was the real reason that led me to suggest our compact. If we had quarrelled, neither would have got her.'

'And so?'

'So if you get her—and you will if you have common sense—you have to thank me for it.'

'I will,' said Holt. He rose and looked out into the dark. 'He is a wiser man than I,' he thought; 'a wiser man than I.'

CHAPTER XXIII

THE Professor left the ship at Aden. He was going to Mombasa, and would find a steamer in a few days to take him there.

So Holman gave a dinner at the hotel to say good-bye. They were sorry to part with him, to lose him from the ship ; they were sorry to think of him, now growing old, returning to the heat, the banishment, the dangers of a tropic wilderness. He should have been at home in some Professor's chair, in place of Clearasmud, for instance, instead of wandering about alone. But men must work for women ; so it has been, and is, and will be. Clearasmud is unmarried.

They drank his health, and sang him songs, and when they left to go back to the steamer he walked down to the harbour with them.

‘ When shall we meet again, Professor ? In a few years we shall be home again. Come and see us in England.’

‘Come and see me in Germany,’ said the Professor. ‘In two years I shall be back.’

‘Come and see me in India, Professor,’ said Holt.

The Professor shook his head. ‘No, no. When I leave Africa I go straight home. No more East for me.’

‘Where shall we meet?’ said Holman. ‘Who knows if we shall ever meet? And perhaps if we do meet—it will be upon a battlefield.’

‘Why not?’ asked the Professor. ‘The best friends fight and then are friends again. But will you fight?’

‘Try us,’ said Warden.

‘Ah, some of you, no doubt. But we think your nation will not fight. Your men are become as women, and go about and beg for peace because they are afraid. Your women go about and say they are men, and cry for a sex war. A house divided against itself will fall. Our men are men, our women are women still.’

‘There are men and women in England too, Professor. Make no mistake.’

‘Mein Gott, there are!’ he cried. ‘It is but froth that comes up to the surface. War will blow the froth away, and show the liquor under-

neath—the good red blood. Here's to our next meeting anywhere !' He raised his hand and gave a shout that made the harbour echo.

' Alas ! ' he said more sadly, ' I am old, and shall not fight again ; but I was at Sedan.'

' Good-bye, Professor.' They all shook hands with him.

' Good-bye, and go with God,' he answered. ' Holman, my friend, write to me some time, and give me news of Mrs. Holman. Warden, you are a soldier, I cannot wish you better. My young friend, Holt——' He paused.

' Professor.'

' You are a dreamer. Never give up dreaming. Dreams are the real and the truest life. Never say to yourself, "I will awaken and see clearly and be master of my fate." Your dreams are real and your awakening would be false. Dream on.'

They stepped on board the boat, and left the Professor standing on the beach. He called to them across the water, ' God go with you.' They answered. Then the night took him and the silence.

The steamer sailed at ten. In half an hour

the town had disappeared with all its lights, and they were out again into the open sea. The harbour light flashed on the horizon like a fading star.

A woman walked along the decks. She stooped to look more closely at each man as she went past, for the decks were dimly lit.

She went down one side, but did not find the man she sought. She crossed, but had no better fortune on the other. She came to the little smoking-room and looked within. Holman and Holt and Warden sat and talked and smoked. She paused, then going to the door she entered.

‘Where is my husband?’

Her voice was sharp and anxious, her face was drawn, her *déshabillé* made her look older, crosser, harder.

The men rose to their feet.

‘Is he not with you?’ answered Holman.

‘Should I come and ask for him if he were in the cabin? No, he has not returned. I woke and found the ship was going, but he had not come in. Has he come on board?’

The men looked at each other. No one had seen him come on board, and they remembered he had not come with them down to the boat.

‘He must be on board, of course,’ said Holman. They went to look. They did not find; there was no sign of Graham, and Holt remembered he had said he would sleep ashore.

‘He has missed the ship?’ she said, when she was told. ‘I do not believe it. No one is such a fool as that. He has stayed behind on purpose—and you know it.’

‘We do not know it,’ answered Holman gravely. ‘If he has, it is not with our knowledge or connivance.’

She looked at them with doubt. ‘Men always hold together,’ she muttered, and turned away towards the door.

The Captain stood there looking in. ‘Pardon, madam,’ he said, ‘here is a letter. A boatman brought it just as we weighed the anchor. It was to me. I did not open it till just a minute ago. And see within.’

He held a letter to her. It was for her, addressed in her husband’s hand. She took it to the light and read it.

Her face turned red, then pale, and as she looked up her eyes were full of tears. She would have fallen, but Holman took her arm. He led her out towards her cabin, and the men, who

had been filled with dislike and amusement, were touched with pity. They could not bear to see a woman weeping so.

‘I wonder what it is,’ said Warden.

When Holman came back he told them. ‘He has gone,’ he said; ‘he never intended to come back on board.’

‘Where has he gone?’

‘He has stayed in Aden, and will go to East Africa with the Professor. It appears he has arranged it all.’

‘What will she do?’

‘I don’t know. She has money of her own. She is now too dazed to think. She never expected such a thing.’

‘She might have done so,’ said Holt. ‘She badgered him sometimes beyond endurance.’

‘He was just as bad,’ said Warden.

‘It is the best he could have done,’ said Holman presently. ‘He was never happy after he left the army.’

‘She made him, didn’t she?’

‘He oughtn’t to have allowed himself to be made. There are times to give way and times not to give way, as Solomon said. That was a time not to give way.’

‘Marriage,’ said Holt thoughtfully, ‘does not turn out always well.’

‘Nothing does,’ said Holman, ‘unless you help it. This one seemed happy enough at first, till he made his great mistake and listened to her against his better judgment. After that all went ill. He hated himself for being idle, and he was fit for nothing else. She despised him for being idle and not making money or position for her. She thought he might be anything, but he had in him no real capacity except for soldiering. He had surrendered his manhood to her. Now he has gone back to a life that will pull him together once more.’

‘I wonder,’ said Holt, ‘if they will ever live together once more?’

‘No one can tell.’

‘They say,’ said Warden, ‘that marriages are made in Heaven. They make them often badly.’

‘Why can’t one know beforehand?’ said Holt. ‘Is it not enough to love a woman and that she loves you? Why are you made to love if you are not meant to marry? You have no choice. It makes one fear, for a mistake will make two lives unhappy. And yet how can one tell? It is a lottery.’

‘It is a lottery,’ said Warden, ‘in which the blanks are many and the prizes few.’

Holman looked up and laughed. ‘To hear you bachelors discourse of marriage,’ he said scornfully, ‘is to watch blind men at search in a dark room for a black cat that isn’t there. You talk of luck and lotteries as if it were all chance. You blame the blue, blue sky, your damned ill-luck, the woman—and that is all you know.’

‘Tell us, then, of the truth,’ said Warden; ‘you married men should give us of your knowledge. You never do. You talk of mysteries and shake your heads like augurs. You let us bachelors drift into an unknown sea without a chart or even a word of warning. Then if things go wrong you blame us. It is your fault. Open our eyes, lighten the dark room, disclose the cat, and coat him with luminous paint that we may catch him. What is marriage?’

‘Listen to me,’ said Holman. ‘Marriage is not a thing, a contract with fixed terms and fixed relations. It is an evolution. It is a life that changes always. It is the growth of two into one that always progresses. You young men fall in love with a girl and she returns it. As you say,

that is not your fault nor your merit. You cannot help it, either of you. That is what is meant by the saying that marriages are made in Heaven. You cannot fall in love as you will, nor can you prevent yourself doing so. Heaven says to the man, "Marry that girl," and to the girl, "Marry that man." So far so good. You marry. Then it is your turn to do something. Heaven has given you a woman who may become a wife ; Heaven has given her a man who may become a husband ; but you must help. Don't think Fate will do it all.'

'Having gone so far,' said Warden, 'she might go all the way and make a complete business of it, I should think.'

'That is not her way,' said Holman. 'She has done enough. Men and women are not machines to be started on a track and left to run. Marriage is perpetual growth. Its beginning is physical, its development is spiritual. From the day you marry, the one decreases and the other increases, or should do so.'

'Again, marriage is a balance. There is the man, the woman, and together they make a unit. But let the man cease to be a man, let the woman cease to be a woman, and the balance is upset.'

Then the whole suffers. It falls to pieces. The force that holds each to each and makes them one is the force of difference, not of sameness.'

'It seems most difficult,' said Warden.

'It is,' said Holman. 'A world where things were easy would not be worth the living in.'

He laughed and went away.

The two young men were silent. To Holt it seemed that Holman's words were meant as warning, that love was a sacred fire from Heaven that must be kept alight or it would die. To its fulfilment went everything a man possessed—his body, life, and soul, his will, his knowledge. Heaven begins, but will and knowledge consummate.

'Holman has frightened me,' said Warden, rising. 'He said that our ideas of marriage were black cats in darkened rooms sought by blind men, and the cats were not there. But his reality is worse.'

'How worse?' asked Holt. 'What is his reality?'

'According to what he said, marriage is a lot of tigers in a cage, sought by two children, with every tiger there,' said Warden. 'Are you not afraid?'

‘Not I,’ laughed Holt.

‘Then you are mad,’ said Warden.

‘What if I am?’

‘It is the only sanity,’ said Warden, ‘in affairs of love.’

CHAPTER XXIV

HOLT and the girl had come into a new world.

The burning air was gone, the barren coasts, the hard and heartless sea ; the strife, the trouble, and the restlessness. The skies were deeper, softer, like a sea filled with a golden tide ; the seas were like another firmament beneath, so clear, so full of light, and the winds blew softly, murmuring low of the home from whence they came—of mountains covered with eternal snow, of forests peopled with great trees and creepers, of plains where stranger peoples lived. It held in it the warmth of women's cheeks, the softness of their kisses, the laugh of children, the romance and strength of men. It whispered in their ears that they were on the threshold of a world where all was new, where dreams became reality, where space became infinity and time drew into an eternity. It told of secrets that have been for ever and will be for ever more. It seemed to

them both that they lived within a magic circle where were they two alone. The world went on about them—there was the ship, the other people, the routine of life, but that was all unreal. It was a phantom world and the only realities were themselves. The world went on its dull routine, it ate and drank, and slept and talked, and they with it; but all that was mechanical. The real life was when the two together sat beside the rail and looked into the sea, when the night closed about them and the stars looked down. Then their souls came from out their hiding-places—his like a burning star, hers like a faint reflection on the snows of that which is to come.

Their lips said little, but their thoughts touched, and each sought to draw the other but to stand firm themselves.

‘When we are married,’ he said suddenly.
‘When we are married——’

‘Why should I marry you?’ she asked.

‘Because I love you.’

‘That might be a reason you should marry me, but why should I marry you?’

‘Because you love me.’

‘Do I? do I? No.’ She shook her head.

‘You love me. You have loved me always

from the time you saw me first and answered me in Venice. You have tried to run from me, to find somewhere a place to hide from me, but there is no escape from love. You took it with you, and it brought you forth again to me.'

'No, no, I do not love you. I like to hear you talk, and that is all. It is some fate that draws us so together—only some fate, or chance, not love. I could not love ; I do not.'

'You love me though you do not know it. You are the magnet and you draw me to you. The Pole is still and white and silent as you are, but it is the Pole that draws the needle, not the quivering steel that draws the Pole. You draw me and I answer. But it is your love that draws me though you know it not.'

'If I possessed it should I not know it? I do not love you, no, nor have I wish to do so. I should be afraid. Why should I give to you my life?'

'To take mine in exchange.'

'I do not want your life and I will keep my own. I cannot follow you to that strange love-country.'

'You shall not follow me, but we will go there hand in hand. I think that you will

know that country better than I do. It is your country.'

'I do not know it or the way. I will not go there. Why should I go? Why should you go? What should we find that we have not?'

'A soul.'

'Have you not now a soul?'

'No!'

'Nor I?'

'Nor you, my lady of the snows. You have no soul. But together we shall make one. Heat and light come not from one, but two.'

'Have I no light or heat?'

'Your lights are northern lights that flash at midnight. They have no warmth. You have no soul.'

'I do not want a soul, then, if I have not one now. I am quite happy. I like my northern lights and my fair snows. You are a dreamer, and you talk in parables and symbols. I know you are the dreamer; your friend has told me.'

'Those who are called the dreamers are so called because they raise their eyes a little from the earth and see into the heavens.' He laughed and looked at her. 'Lift up your eyes and look

with me into my dream, that is not mine but yours.'

'I am afraid,' she said, 'it is a dream. Suppose the dream should be an unhappy one, a nightmare for us, as it has been to others. Is it not better not to dream, to keep one's feet on earth and walk, than try to fly and fail?'

'We shall not fail.'

'How can you tell or I? The road is strange that you would lead me, and we do not know the way. We do not know where we should go, what we should seek. You talk of love. How do you know you have it and not some mirage? You talk of marriage, what is marriage? Come, let us reason.'

He did not answer. Does a hungry man who sees a feast before him listen when one says to him: 'Come, let us reason, are you really hungry? Is that the fruit for eating? Let us consider first what hunger is and whether you are really hungry. Let us consider whether fruits are made for eating?' Does he listen? Is reason justified of reason then?

She smiled at him.

'You do not answer. Have you then no words?'

‘I have no words. Where are there any words in all the world? How can I tell you of a country where I have not been?’

‘Many have been there. Cannot we learn from them?’

He laughed.

‘You wish to ask the way? You think that there are teachers? There are the poets. Have not all the great poets of the world tried to make words and failed? Words are such weaklings, they are to feelings as paper is to gold. I might give you words and say they are worth this or that, but in themselves they have no value. The gold must be within your heart, your heart.’

‘And there is none?’ she said; ‘the treasury is empty? Is that what you would say?’

‘That is what I would say. My heart is full, and I must give you all it holds.’

‘And leave yourself a beggar?’

‘So I wish to be.’

‘And you take nothing in return?’

‘Yes, I will take you, all of you. I want somewhere to put my gold. Open your heart and I will fill it.’

‘I will not open it until I know what you would put there. Perhaps I would not care for it,

and it may be that in my heart there is some treasure too, that it is not empty as you tell me. There is some gold, and you would steal it and give nothing. So I must keep its doors close shut.'

'You don't believe me.'

'Neither do I believe nor disbelieve you. You say that you have love for me. I ask you what is love ; you cannot tell me. You say that you will make me love you, and again I ask what is the love that I must give you, and again no answer. Would you have me shut my eyes and be quite blind ?'

'I would not have you so. You are so. But I would cure your blindness—in marriage.'

'And what is marriage?' she asked, laughing.

'I am not married. How can I say?'

'You are a worthy doctor. You tell me I am blind and you will cure me. I ask you how ; you answer marriage. I ask you what is marriage, and you say that you have no idea. Is that the way that doctors treat their patients, with a prescription that is to them unknown ?'

'It has cured others.'

'How do you know?'

'I see it.'

'Maybe. Some like it. But others there are

it poisons. How do you know it will not poison me? I think your system is a kill or cure. What harm is there in this blindness that I should take such risks? Why should I not continue blind? No! Let us consider, if you wish, what marriage is before we think of jumping into it.'

'What do you think it ought to be?'

'I do not know. Let us consider what it is, next what it ought to be, and then we can decide.'

'So be it,' and he laughed. 'Let us discuss.'

'Let us observe, and then discuss what we have seen—you the man's side and I the woman's—so shall we learn.'

The gods heard and laughed.

CHAPTER XXV

ALL the ship people watched and understood. They left them quite alone. They saw the two, the man and girl, groping about as blind folk do in daylight, and quite unconscious that they were observed. The lovers thought that no one saw that which no one could help seeing. They thought themselves in outward semblance just what they had been, that no one would guess that there was any change. They went about as in a dream, seeking often each other's company as drawn by some attraction. But often, too, each sat alone, and dreamed alone, as if the world did not exist.

She tried to comprehend what love and marriage should be, asking herself eternal questions. She stood as by a river flowing past, longing to step into it, yet afraid because she did not know its depths, its force, or whither it would take her. She must know first her way.

‘Tell me,’ she asked him, ‘have you discovered?’

‘No’; he shook his head. ‘No one can. And if I could I would not. I am not afraid of the unknown; I want it; I am tired of beaten tracks.’

‘Yes; you are reckless, I am prudent. I have looked.’

‘What have you found?’

‘I looked about for love, and I found this. Othello and Hamlet were in love with the Princess. At least they thought so, and they wanted her to think so. Now they are not in love with her, and hardly speak to her.’

‘That was not love.’

‘Not love! How should one know what is or is not? She thought she liked them, but now she never looks at them.’

‘That was not love. She is the East, they are the West. You cannot mate two contradictions. They saw in her Romance and followed her; she saw in them Romance and held to them. Now the West calls to them, and her Romance has gone. The East that sparkles in this sea and murmurs in the wind has claimed her back. She fears the West. That was not love. Go on.’

She laughed and blushed a little. ‘Then there

was Captain Warden. He thought he liked me, did he not? But he has changed his mind.'

'You thought you liked him, and you changed your mind.'

She smiled again. 'And such is love,' she said. 'It lasts a summer's day and dies.'

'Love never dies. He did not love you, nor you him. Go on, another case.'

'There are those German girls.'

'You mean the girls who are going out to marry men they have not seen? That is not love.'

'How do I know? I have been told that marriage comes from love. They go to marry, therefore they are in love.'

'That is quite different. These girls go and marry out of love for God and not for man, because through marriage they hope to further what they think is God's religion, just as your nuns remain unmarried for the same reason.'

'Do not speak of the nuns. I love them. But these others! It frightens me to think such things are done and called religion.'

'And me. - It frightens me too when you talk of religion and love in the same breath. Go on to another case.'

‘The only other case on board is you.’

‘And you.’

‘Not me. You may leave me out. Let us consider you. You tell me you are in love?’

‘I do.’

‘How can you tell that it will last?’

‘Because I know it.’

‘That is no answer. Let it pass. It makes you moody, dull, and solitary. Would love do that?’

‘Why, certainly it would, for I am hungry and athirst. You can’t expect a starving man to laugh and joke.’

‘You want to eat me?’

‘Yes. I want to eat you.’

‘I do not wish to be food to such a cannibal. I am not in love. I do not want at all to eat you.’

‘You are in love. If you were not you would not sit by me, you would not talk to me, you would not look at me.’

‘Oh yes, I would from curiosity.’

‘You do not want to eat me. No! But you will like being eaten.’

‘If wishing to be eaten is a sign of love, I have it not. So much for love. I don’t think much of it. Let us go on to marriage.’

‘Well?’

‘What is your idea of marriage?’

‘I have none.’

‘That is what I complain of in you. You want me to jump with you into an unknown sea. I have observed some marriages. There is that of the Grahams.’

‘That was no marriage.’

‘They fought, and now have separated.’

‘That was no marriage, I say.’

‘How can you tell what is and is not marriage? If we married we might become as they are.’

‘Never. Why don’t you take a better case, the Holmans?’

‘I think that an exception.’

‘We shall be just as they are.’

She laughed again. ‘How can you tell? It is a gamble. Why should we gamble with our lives and all our future? Let us be certain first.’

The man laughed, but there was a bitterness in it. ‘I wonder were you asked before you were born whether you would be born or not, and if you answered “Stop! I must know just what my life is to be like before I want to be born.”’

‘I would have done so if I could, no doubt.’

‘And when you come to die will you object until you know what there is after death?’

‘It would not be any use. But what have life and death to do with love and marriage?’

‘This only, that they are all inevitable. No one asks a reason about being born or dying, nor does he about love. It is inevitable if it is true, and if not true then not inevitable.’

‘Then if that be true, and also that I love you, I shall be made to marry you.’

‘You will.’

‘I will not. I will use my judgment.’

‘And it says?’

‘There is no hurry, and see your way before you jump. Shall we be friends and forget all this?’

‘I will not. No.’

‘What! Not be friends?’

‘Certainly not. Do you say to a hungry man, “You may not eat this peach, but you may look at it; you may note its colour, freshness, roundness, and you may inhale its perfume. But you must not eat.” Do you say that?’

‘Why not?’

‘Well, if you do, the hungry man replies that

he will not. He will go away from sight and sound and perfume.' He rose.

She looked at him with sorrow. 'And in two days we reach Bombay.'

'I wish it were to-morrow.'

'So to be rid of me?'

'Yes.'

She rose. 'Good-bye,' she said; 'we can say it now, and not wait till we arrive.'

'Good-bye.'

'When you can tell me what love is,' she said, 'return.'

'You ask of me the impossible.'

'I ask of you to make me understand what love and marriage is, that I may know if what you offer me is good.'

He looked at her in silence. Then he went. 'Yet I will do the impossible,' he said, within himself.

'I ask him for the impossible,' she thought. 'Am I a fool? No; for if he cannot make me love and know it, then he does not love me. I will not marry him unless I must, and he must make me.'

For two days they lived apart.

CHAPTER XXVI

‘DID you know?’ said Mrs. Holman, ‘that we ran away to be married?’

She laughed and looked at them. They sat at tea upon the deck—the Holmans, Warden, Holt, the girl, the little Princess. Mrs. Graham was not with them. She always kept apart now that her husband had abandoned her.

‘She ran away with me,’ said Holman, nodding.

‘You ran away with me,’ retorted Mrs. Holman. ‘You put me in the dog-cart by main force.’

‘You made me do it.’

They all laughed.

‘I thought,’ said Warden, ‘that Holman was your guardian—your only guardian.’

‘So I was,’ said Holman. ‘She was my ward by law. That was the cause of all the trouble. I could not get away from her. Therefore she ran away with me. I was quite helpless. So you men, beware!—never be guardians.’

‘But why run?’ asked Warden. ‘You were her guardian; could you not marry her without resorting to such a terrible expedient?’

‘She made me,’ answered Holman.

‘I didn’t,’ said Mrs. Holman. ‘He made me run off with him because he was afraid.’

‘Of whom?’

‘Of a woman, of my schoolmistress, of Britannia. He ran away from fear of her. And he a soldier!’

‘I think,’ said Holt, ‘that you should tell us all, now you have roused our curiosity.’

‘I will,’ said Mrs. Holman, ‘and it will be a warning to both you girls.’

‘More like to both you men,’ said Holman.

‘Most like to none of us,’ said Warden. ‘You cannot hold yourselves up as awful examples of the folly of mankind, but rather of its occasional luck—astounding luck and wisdom. Come, tell us all.’

‘Who shall begin?’ asked Mrs. Holman.

‘I will begin,’ said Holman. ‘I was once a subaltern, happy, young, and free, like many are. I had no relatives except a cousin, a man much older than myself. I hardly remember him. He was a great traveller—always away in Central Asia or in Africa. He had one daughter, Minnie, who

was brought up at school. He died in some outlandish part, and when his will was opened it was found that I was appointed as her guardian. A few months later I came home on furlough, and went to see her at her school.'

'It was such fun !' said Mrs. Holman.

'For you, no doubt,' said Holman ; 'but for me? Well, it was different. I remembered her a child I used to tease before I went to India, and somehow I did not realise she had grown. I thought to find a child again. I filled my pockets with sweets, and went all unsuspecting into the lion's den. First I was confronted with Britannia.'

'Who was Britannia?'

'The schoolmistress. She was tall and stout, and very dignified and proper.'

'She was a dear at heart,' said Mrs. Holman.

'Perhaps. I never saw her heart, only her armour and her front. What she expected I don't know—an aged general or a colonel. What she found was a subaltern of twenty-seven. She disapproved profoundly ; she was almost shocked. I had some trouble to show her that there was no mistake. When I had proved it to her, at last she sent for Minnie.'

'It seemed a dreadful time to wait,' said Mrs.

Holman. 'I wondered what on earth you were doing.'

'I went towards the door to meet the little girl, to rumple up her hair and kiss her. The door opened, and in walked a dignified young woman of seventeen. I stopped.'

'You did look foolish, Harry. You just stared at me.'

'No wonder ; I was embarrassed. Any man would be. You weren't.'

'No ; why should I be ? Weren't you my cousin, and didn't I remember you quite well ? You were not changed at all.'

'You were, and I didn't recognise you at all ; you had grown up so much.'

'Do you know,' said Mrs. Holman to the others, 'that he never kissed me at all, only shook hands as if I were a stranger ?'

'I did not dare.'

'You men have little courage. And then he began talking to Britannia about—what do you suppose ? About my lessons, music, and dancing.'

'Highly proper in a guardian,' said Warden approvingly.

'Great rubbish and impertinence I thought it from a young subaltern. He even asked if I had

cooking lessons—cooking lessons, mind you! What did he know of cooking?’

‘I often wished I did,’ said Holman.

‘I almost hated you,’ said Mrs. Holman; ‘but, after a time, Britannia let us go out into the garden to make friends.’

‘She was mollified by my behaviour,’ said Holman.

‘Mollified, indeed! However, we went out, and gradually he thawed out of his guardian manners, which he only put on because he, a soldier, was afraid of a schoolmistress and a little girl. He got quite jolly, and even gave me the sweets. Then we fell in love with each other.’

‘Excuse me,’ said Holman; ‘I did not fall in love with you for ever so long after.’

‘No matter,’ said Mrs. Holman calmly, ‘I fell in love with you. That was the main point.’

‘You hear, you bachelors,’ said Holman, ‘that is the main point. You think you go about and choose the girl you want. Oh, little you know, little you know!’

‘That was during term time,’ said Mrs. Holman, ‘and we only met twice more. During the Easter holidays he came down again, and we met every day for ten days. Britannia even let me go out

with him a few times. She liked you, Harry, though you were so afraid of her.'

'May not a guardian take his ward out walking?'

'That depends on the size and age of wards and guardians. I believe Britannia feared more the look of the thing and what people would say than that she thought it improper herself. She was a good old thing, though overpowering.'

'At the end of the holidays we were already engaged in a sort of way.'

'What is "a sort of way"? ' asked Warden virtuously. 'A tacit, underhand agreement concealed from the authority? I am surprised and pained. A guardian, too. What are the marks of such an engagement?'

'"The marks"? ' asked Mrs. Holman.

'The outward signs and tokens.'

'Why do you want to know?'

'All knowledge is useful,' he replied.

'Never you mind,' she answered. 'Go and find out for yourself if you want to know. Well, Harry went away and left me, and I wasn't even allowed to write to him without Britannia seeing the letters. School seemed awfully dull.'

'What do you think she did?' asked Holman.

‘She wrote me secretly to come and take her away.’

‘He was my guardian. Couldn’t he take me to another school if he thought right?’ she asked.

‘It wasn’t that at all,’ said Holman scornfully.

‘Of course it wasn’t. I wanted to see him, and I was afraid he would go back to India without coming down again. Men are so casual. However, he came down to see me. Then we decided to run away.’

‘I want to know,’ said Warden reprovingly, ‘why you could not have behaved properly and openly and told Britannia.’

They both laughed. ‘I would have liked to see Harry tell Britannia he was going to marry me. She would have sent for the police. Indeed she would. Harry’s being my guardian would not have mattered to her at all. She said no self-respecting girl should marry before twenty-three at least. She would have shut me up on bread and water. We talked it over and decided we daren’t tell her. So we decided to run away.’

‘You mean *you* did,’ said Holman.

‘I mean both of us did ; and oh,’ she said, addressing the two girls, ‘always be run away with

if you can. Don't make of love and marriage a business and a weariness, a formality. It is romance ; then make it a romance. It will remind you always that it was love that made you marry. It will be something to remember. We ran away one morning early. It was midsummer, and the sun was shining on the garden, the dew was on the roses, the birds were singing. It was a morning made to run away in. I never shall forget it—when I came out of the garden door into that bright world—the freshness and the glory of it all.' She stopped and smiled. Her thoughts went back with gladness to that beginning of their married life. It seemed as if there came from that dawn a light that shone on all their days together. She was in a dream.

'And yet,' said Holman, 'at the end you stopped. You would not come. Do you remember ? I had to lift you up.'

She did not answer. Yes, she remembered. He stood beside the mare's head and she ran up towards him. Then suddenly she stopped. A fear came into her, an understanding of what it meant that she was doing, giving him all her life. She stopped two paces from him. She would have gone to him but could not. She would

have turned and run away but could not. She stood and stared at him.

‘Get up,’ he said ; ‘get up into the dog-cart.’

She did not move.

‘Minnie,’ he said, ‘make haste ; we shall be seen. Get up.’ She did not move but swayed a little, and her eyes were full of fear and of entreaty. She could not come but he must take her, and he understood. He left the horse’s head and went to her. He kissed her and felt her tremble. Then he put his arms about her and lifted her into the dog-cart. The mare stood quiet, wondering no doubt what all this meant. Perhaps an understanding was in her and she stood still. Did they remember? Yes. Who would forget?

‘We drove away,’ said Mrs. Holman, ‘into the most perfect morning that ever shone. The lanes were all deserted. There was May yet in the hedges, and the air was sweet and pure and full of the scent of hay. We ran away.’

They ran away together and they never did come back, nor did their going on together ever cease. They would go on till dawn and day were passed and night was come—together. They would go through the darkness till they came to other greater dawns.

There was a silence, for the charm of things untold, yet understood, was entered into all who heard. There was a silence. In the heavens the mellow light of afternoon made a magnificence, the sea lay in a drowse of indolence ; its waves were sighs of happiness and dreams.

‘You had good fortune. You made marriage a romance,’ said Holt.

‘And so it should be, so it is when love is in it. And for the rest,’ she said, ‘I think that love is always much the same. It has its ways. I made him run away with me, and he ran off with me against my will.’

And Holt remembered the Professor and the book. ‘Read it and disbelieve,’ said the Professor. He had read it ; what had he to disbelieve ? That love is all on one side—on the man’s ; that women have no part, no choice, but are unwilling victims to the force of men ? Yes, that was what there was to disbelieve. Men force women by their strength, women force men by their weakness. Which is most strong, the weakness or the strength ? Man loves woman and woman loves man ; which is the greater love ? There is no lesser or no greater. They are different, and together they make up a whole.

Love is not a thing, nor is it a quality. Love is a relation of a man and woman to each other ; it is action and reaction. Man loves woman, he would not have that love returned in the same form he gave it. Woman loves man, she would not have him love her as she loves him. Love is a question and an answer, each calls, each answers.

‘She asks me “What is love?” I feel it and I know it ; how can I make her know? She loves me ; did she not do so I could not love her. She loves me but she does not know it. How can I make her know that she loves me?’

Yet still he did not understand. It is a woman’s privilege, her honour, and her nature, that should be carried off. The last move in the game is man’s, and it is ‘check,’ nay more than ‘check’—it is ‘checkmate.’ But he must give it—to her desire. He must show his strength. Love rises to the heavens but it is based upon the earth, on deeds, not words.

CHAPTER XXVII

IN these last days the little Princess and the girl were much together. Their lovers had abandoned them, or they had sent away their lovers. Warden and Holt had made a place on the poop-deck where they kept to themselves. Othello and Hamlet were inseparable. As they had been fierce enemies, so now they were become fast friends, while the bone of their contention was forgotten. Perhaps they were ashamed, not because they had fought, but because of the futility of the reason. For there are things to fight about and things not to fight about ; there are women who may be rightly fought about, and women about whom a man has no right to fight.

To defend a woman of one's family, a wife, a sister, daughter, a man should fight if that be the only way. But for two men to quarrel about a girl they think they love, and fight for her possession, is absurd, even did her possession go

to the victor. To fight about a girl that neither loves is sheerest folly.

And neither loved her ; they knew that now. Romance had fled. In Europe the Indian girl might be a princess ; she was unknown, out of an unknown world that held most wonderful things. She was exotic, strange, like some dark tropic fruit. Here in the East her rareness fled. She was a sister or a cousin of the dark-skinned peoples seen at Port Said and at Aden. She was a daughter of the East—this world of burning suns, of heat, of thirst, of weariness, of sand, of dust, of poverty. This world revolted them and made them fear. It is a fear that comes to Europeans in the East, the fear of being swallowed up in the great Eastern sea. It is so great, so strong that to preserve ourselves we shrink from it, we push it from us, and we hate it. Those who have conquered hate have loved again and learned to understand it—they are few.

Othello and Hamlet first were drawn towards the Indian girl by their desire for newness, for romance, which they endowed her with ; they shrank from her now, because instinctive fear of Eastern things made them attribute to her defects that she had not. Therefore they shunned her.

She hardly noticed. She in her turn forgot them, for the East had claimed her back.

‘I thought,’ she said one day, ‘that I was happy when in Europe. I thought I liked your skies, your cold, your greyness. I thought I liked the strength, the vigour that it gives. I got accustomed to it.’

‘And now?’ Miss Ormond asked.

‘And now I know I did not. I love this sun, this warmth, these airs that touch me softly like a message from my home. I love this laziness, not to be always wanting to be doing something, not to be restless, active, and unhappy. Life is “to be” and not only “to do” or “suffer”; life is to rest, and feel the tide of life pass slowly by; to float upon the surface of time’s tide rocked by the hours, which are its waves. I am a lotus-eater,’ and she laughed.

‘You regret nothing?’ asked the girl; ‘the civilisation, the manners, the luxury, the freedom, the people. Is there nothing you have left behind that you will not regret, will not wish to have brought with you?’

‘I think,’ the little Princess answered reflectively, ‘that there is nothing. Do not mistake me. I have spent three fruitful years in Europe;

I have made friends whom I shall always have in pleasant remembrance ; I have learnt things which I shall not forget. And do not think I do not admire much that I have seen ; that I do not acknowledge you have much which we have not. I found it hard to come away ; I almost thought that I could never again be happy in the East. But now it is all different. I feel the East has come about me, and I love her as a child does her mother. I may admire the West ; I love the East, my home. I had forgotten her, now she has taken me again.'

'I think,' returned the girl, 'I understand, and that even if I learned to know your East, the West would still be home, and all that it did be good.'

'Yes ; all that the East does is good to me. When I was in your West I doubted. I saw your women free, and with life open to them. I saw the girls free to choose their husbands, free to take or to reject. I saw them marry when they like, or not marry ; all seemed good. I wished we too were as you are. But now that the East has taken me again I doubt.'

'What do you doubt ?'

'That, taken all in all, your customs are more

happy than ours are ; that they would suit us could we take them. You have your truths, and we have ours. We look on marriage differently from you ; our families are different. You think yours better, we think ours.'

'You are all married as children, aren't you, by your parents ; you have no choice, you cannot know if you will love or hate ; you cast love from out your lives by that?'

'What you call love we have another name for,' answered the little Princess. 'We do not honour it as you. We are afraid of it. Love is a storm, a passion of the heart, and it makes shipwrecks oftener than it drives into a harbour. It is a lightning of the sky ; it comes and goes, no one can tell from whence or where. It strikes and kills. It does not light or warm. You worship love, we honour marriage.'

'And what is marriage?' asked the girl. 'Is it not the goal of love? Is it not the end to which love drives?'

'That is what you say ; but we say that marriage is the opposite of love, such love as that you speak of. The love in marriage does not suddenly flash out and die ; it is a fire that is built upon the hearth, and grows by care and feeding.

It gives light and warmth ; it does not sear or hurt. It is the union of two hearts, two souls to gain an immortality. It includes reason, will, and self-control. Love is abandonment.'

'To what? Some say abandonment to the will of God who gives it.'

'Or to the devil, who may send it in his ends?'

The girl laughed. 'And which is true? Is love a god or devil?'

The little Princess shook her head. 'How should I know? Perhaps it's sometimes the one, sometimes the other. I am not a sage, I cannot answer, nor do I know where truth is always. I tell you what we think of these things in India. Maybe we have the half of truth and you the other half. We mortals never see truth whole.'

'Tell me your side of truth that I may know it,' asked the girl.

The little Princess smiled. 'We are two girls,' she said. 'We neither of us know what love and marriage is, nor can do so till we love and marry. Why do we talk of it?'

'But surely we can know something. We need not go all blindly into the future, need we?'

'We can know what others tell us, that is all ; whether they tell us truly we have no means to

judge. But I will tell you what my people say. They say that the Western people have no idea what marriage is, or family.

‘Marriage is a union, a growing together. It cannot begin too soon. For man and woman to be one in thought and soul, they must have been brought up together as children ; their minds and thoughts and souls must have developed in company. A man and woman brought up as strangers never learn completely to pull together, to think together, never learn each other’s powers or limitations, are never in full sympathy. The truest marriage begins in infancy.’

‘But,’ said the girl, ‘to take two children and marry them before they are big enough to have developed their likes and their dislikes is to run the chance that they will grow up to dislike each other.’

‘It may happen so sometimes, for nothing is perfect, but it is not common. If parents like each other, so will their children. And then the growing up together prevents the rise of differences. They accept each other as husband and wife, just as children accept their fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters. There is a warm and close affection, and a habit of mind quite different from what you call

love. It is not so much the tie of blood that links brother to sister as a childhood spent together. So is it with infant marriages.'

'But brothers and sisters often do not love each other.'

'With you they don't, with us they do. There is a whole world between the family as you know it and as we do. We think that you have no idea of family or of married life. Your sons go out into the world. They leave their homes, their parents with pleasure. They come to India, and perhaps they never see their parents again. They do not mind. Your girls come out and marry. Their first idea is to get husbands, and their family count as little.

'You marry often in haste, from "love," and then in India, at least, your life together ceases in a few years. The wives go home, the men stay out. Children grow up without their parents. Even in England the boys are sent to schools, and so grow up away from their father's influence and knowledge. We could not do these things. The family is to us a sacred thing, it holds together always. Our wives so love their husbands that they do not desire the outer world and the company of other men as your women do. Their

husband is to them enough, through him they touch the world. Men are the rough and harsh and stronger things of life; women are the secret, tender things. Men are the rind, women are the sweet and hidden fruit that holds the seeds. You think it is men's force and jealousy that keeps the Indian women hidden, it is their own desire. Our women used to burn themselves upon their husband's pyre. Many would do so now were it allowed. Our system has its faults, it has its virtues, so has yours. Marriage with us is greater than it is with you.'

'But it has no romance. It kills free-will and choice. It makes of marriage the inevitable; no one is master of his fate.'

'No one is master of his fate, neither with you nor us,' replied the little Princess, 'and to gain one truth more fully, you must sacrifice another. You cannot have both sides at once. I thought in Europe that your side was better, I think in India that our side is. You exalt love, we marriage; which is the greater truth?'

Which is the greater truth? Both truths are true, and as no nation can keep both at once, is it not well that each should have and keep its own, else it might perish from the earth? To every

individual in this world, to every nation, and to every continent, there is a separate truth, and all together make the Truth of all Humanity.

Yet, thought the girl, if that be true, then love is enemy to marriage. The perfect marriage must begin with life, yet does not end with it. The cult of love alone would sometimes render marriage impossible. They are the opposites of one another, the complement. As north to south, as hot to cold they contradict, and yet you cannot have a north without a south, a heat without a coldness. Life is an oscillation always between two extremes, love which is free and marriage which is a bond. Marriage is the death of love, and its denial. It is love's consummation, and love dies. Yet love leads to marriage, is the only road that is always true, and marriage leads to love—not the same love.

‘How shall I ever know the truth?’ she thought. ‘For it is contradiction upon contradiction.’

Out of her questionings she came back to present things.

‘If that be so,’ she asked, ‘if marriage must begin with childhood with your people, what will you do? You are not married?’ She smiled

with sympathy into the girl's dark face. 'But, forgive me, I should not say such things or ask such questions.'

'I do not mind,' she answered. 'You ask what I shall do? I do not know. Fate will direct and tell me. I do not wish to marry now. It is too late. Yet it is hard to live alone. In India as in England unmarried women have no organisations of their own. Fate will decide.'

'Does Fate tell one true?'

'Fate is the only Power that tells the truth to us so that we understand. Fate, as we call what you call Providence. In all the greatest things of life it is the only guide. Do what you must.'

'Not what you wish?'

'They are the same. When Fate resolves that you shall do a thing she makes you will it, makes you desire it, so commands your heart you cannot help it. Only your wish must come into your heart, not head. "The head denies, the heart affirms."'

To the girl, sitting all alone at night looking across the sea, it seemed that she got always the same answer. To understand, to comprehend is never of the mind. It is the function of the intellect, of thought, always to deny, to sift, to

see the falsehood and the foolishness of things. Everything is false seen by the mind, for to everything there is the false side and the true ; the mind sees but the first. The mind will anchor you in everlasting doubt ; and so it should do till the truth seen by the heart grows strong, so strong that nothing can withstand it. That is mind's function.

‘I asked him what was love ; he could not answer me. I asked him what was marriage, and he had no words. And yet he loves me and would marry me. He could not answer, for these things are felt not told. That I may know what love is, I must love ; that I may know what marriage is, then I must marry.’

She stared across the dark.

The night was on the sea, the Indian night. The waves went past in rhythmic dance, their crests flashed fire. The stars stood forth against the sky so clear, so large, with such a brilliancy they made a lustre in the darkness, and it shone like some great dusky pearl. Sometimes a streak of light flashed from the heavens with a message to the earth.

On the breeze was borne the faintest odour of the land, of palms, of flowers, of sun-baked plains

and steamy uplands, of scent and spices thrown abroad.

The night was full of passion. It called, it called. It said : 'Be one with us and with all life. Love is the king that rules the world. It holds the seas together, and it draws the rivers to them. Every flower and fruit is born of love ; it is the spirit that goes forth and lives upon the world and makes it live. It holds the rocks together and the hills ; its passions move the winds.'

She heard, she felt, she understood.

She knew at last it is the mind that seeks, the heart that always finds.

Her heart had found, and she would let it lead her. She could not help but go where it commanded. So was the struggle past and peace was come.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AND so they came to their last day on board.

‘To-morrow we shall land,’ said Warden. ‘The Captain says we shall sight the harbour light soon after midnight, and be in at dawn. Our voyage is almost over.’

‘I did not think I should be sorry,’ said Mrs. Holman, ‘but I am. Our voyage is over ; by to-morrow it will have become “portion and parcel of the dreadful past,” and yet it will not. Nothing is ever really past, and nothing goes completely to the limbo of forgotten things. We are made up of all our past, and take it with us. We are all summaries of all that we have seen and done and felt. The past is never passed, the future never vacant ; for past and present and future are all one.’

‘We may forget,’ said Warden, ‘but the effect remains. I have learnt things. I may forget

them, but they will not leave me. They will be part of me.'

'As they are for us all. Where will we all be in a week? Scattered upon a continent. I shall be sorry to say good-bye. The nuns, I never shall forget them. They have taught me things.'

'What things?'

'Things that are good to keep by one. They have made me to remember that in man's world women have their part if they will see it. The half is ours if we will take it. We have a truth, one of our own, which we can keep, and which the world will be glad of. But we forget it. Yet even in marriage we should never do so. For marriage is of woman and of man. And if the man forget to be a man, the woman to be a woman, marriage is dead. It takes two opposites to make a whole. Yet we forget, because we say that woman has no truth in herself alone. She must be part of man.'

'And man of woman?'

'Yes; but it is not true.'

'It is not true,' said Warden. 'We have our truth that women never know.'

'Your truth is in the State, ours should be in the Church. The faith of Christ is woman's faith,

the love of Christ is woman's love; we have forgot it. We are forgetting now that we are women.'

'And we?' asked Warden.

'Yours is the State, ours is the Church—that is the Man and Wife of Nations.'

'Truly,' said Warden, 'we forget it. But,' he continued, 'you would not have women turn nuns nowadays, shut themselves up, make themselves subject to priests, abjure the world?'

'That,' she replied, 'is but the form, and the form should vary according to the time, the people, and the circumstances. What I mean is, that just as men have other futures beside marriage, other ties, other companionship, other loves, other duties to the State, so should women have. And I mean that as every community that lives together happily is cemented by a love, a sentiment, and not mere self-interest—as, for instance, men are bound into regiments by love of their country, which is a religion—so if women are to have societies to cultivate their own virtues they must be cemented together by a sentiment. There are always more women than men, and they cannot live alone. In Eastern countries the escape is polygamy, which is their only refuge. It is

really a woman's institution, not a man's. It enables her, if not to have a husband to herself, at least to have a child. In Catholic countries there are the sisterhoods. *They* are mediæval in form, but still they are something. Only in Protestant countries there is nothing. A girl must marry, or be a lonely spinster. A woman in herself is no one; womanhood of itself has no honour. Women have no influence, save the married ones through their husbands. Therefore in Catholic countries women hold, and have always held, a much stronger position than in Protestant countries, because they knew and were helped how to be women. And our future lies in being women more and more; not in aping men far off, but in cultivating our own virtues and making them a power in the State; not in merging ourselves with men, but in differentiating ourselves.'

'It would be a dreary world,' said Warden, 'where women were all trying to be men in petticoats.'

'They have begun to shed even the petticoats now. But that, of course, you cannot know.' Then they both laughed.

'And I am sorry,' she went on, 'to leave you

all. To-morrow we shall have parted. You go, and Mr. Holt, the little Princess, Mrs. Graham. Who knows where Mrs. Graham will go, or whether she and her husband will ever meet again! Even Othello and Hamlet I am sad to say farewell to.'

'They now have other names,' said Warden, 'for they have ceased to justify the old ones. They make love no more, nor are they jealous.'

'What do you call them?'

'Damon and Pythias, for they are inseparable. The Indian girl no longer is a princess. The East has robbed her of her royalty. She is called Luxmi.'

'And I?'

'You have not changed, nor ever will. Holman is Darby, you are Joan to everlasting.' She smiled at him.

'I have two other names.'

'For whom?'

'For Holt and for the girl. She is no more "the girl" to me, for she is lost.'

'What are they now?'

'Their names are Salami and Zulamith. You know the legend.'

'I have forgotten it.'

‘They loved on earth, but did not know they loved. They would not listen to their hearts. They thought that they were wise, and so they lived apart ; at last they died. Their souls went up to Heaven, and they were placed with all the sky between them.’

‘That was not happy.’

‘They were unhappy, for they realised at last they were in love, and each looked to see where the other was. They saw each other with all the sky between them. They could not bear it.’

‘What did they do ?’

‘They built themselves a bridge of stars across the sky, and met at last to make a burning sun. The bridge is still across the sky. They call it now the Milky Way.’

‘I wonder,’ said Mrs. Holman, ‘will they build that bridge, or will they live as they are doing now, with all a heaven between them ?’

‘They will not,’ said Warden. ‘They need build no bridge. Is not the old one still across the sky ? Once built it lasts for ever. They will find it.’

‘Yes, they will,’ said Mrs. Holman.

That night they held a concert on the ship

to say good-bye. They sang. Into their songs they put their sorrow; for all were sorry. They had grown together, all to like and know each other. They would part, but each would take within his heart more than a memory, something real to be for ever part of himself.

The music passed across the sea and mingled with the murmurs of the waves.

The music died away. They sat a little looking at the night, and then the decks began to empty. Slowly they went, till all were gone but one. The lights went out, the chairs were piled upon the gratings. There was a solitude. The only sounds were from the engines beating and the surge of seas upon the sides. But these had so grown into the consciousness that they were now unheard. There seemed an utter silence, a solitude that stretched up to the stars, that touched the waves, an utter loneliness.

He looked across the sea. He wondered was there anywhere in space a god of love who listened and would help? Was all the universe abandoned to the soulless streams of force? Were all the gods then dead, and was there nowhere any love within the universe?

‘If anywhere there be a soul,’ he cried, ‘a soul who lives, a soul that is called Love, then listen. Come near and help me.’

There was no answer.

Yes, there was a voice, not from without, not from the stars or from infinite space. There was an echo in his heart. It answered : ‘I am here—here in thy heart. What seekest thou? My son, what seekest thou?’

‘I look for words,’ he answered.

‘What words?’

‘To tell her what is love and marriage, so that she may understand.’

The waves that passed picked up his answer and they laughed; they turned their heads, they raced, they flung it to the air in high derision, rushing on their way to ocean playgrounds. The winds heard as they passed from continent to continent, and murmured to each other in soft scorn, ‘He looks for words, for *words*.’ The stars set in their courses winked all their wicked diamond eyes in merriment. ‘For words, for words. Thou fool, to think to build an immortality with words on words!’

The laughter hurt him. ‘What, then,’ he asked, ‘if not with words?’

‘With deeds,’ it said ; ‘with deeds upon this earth.’

‘Love is a spirit,’ he replied, ‘and what have deeds such as are possible to us to do with spirits ? Deeds are of the body.’

‘Love is a spirit,’ was the answer, ‘but it is incarnated in flesh, and thou canst reach it only by the flesh. Love grows to Heaven, but its roots are in the earth. And dost thou think to found a temple to a god on words, on mind, on thought ? Not so.’

‘My reason tells me,’ he replied. His words died in the laughter of a universe. It rang through all the worlds and beat upon the bounds of time. Even the winds and echoes laughed, for they heard of what was emptier than *they* were.

‘Wilt thou then listen,’ said the voice, ‘to Reason or to me ? What has Reason told thee ever ? Did it make thee live, or love, and can it save thee from the death ?’

‘Canst thou ?’

‘I can. For life and love are mine ; Death is my servant.’

‘Then speak on ; I listen.’

‘Rise up.’

He rose. 'Go forward,' said the voice. He went, as men go in a dream. He stood by the companion. 'Now send thy soul to call her, for she waits.'

He sent his soul and stood bereft of life. A footstep on the stair, a white form rising in the dusk. She came, she came. She brought his soul back to him.

He put his arm about her, and they passed into the shadow.

'You asked me "What is Love?"' he whispered. 'It is this and this. You asked me "What is Marriage?"' It is this. Lip unto lip, and heart to heart, and soul to soul for ever.

'Love is the angel with the golden key that opens gates of Immortality. His seal is this.'

They sat together, and the sky, the sea, the night made solitude about them. 'Why did you come?' he asked.

'You called me.'

'Yes, I called you.'

'Why did not you call before? I waited listening, but your call came not. I would have come to you, but that you did not make me. You were so long, so long.'

‘You hid from me.’

‘I was afraid, and I was strong. You would not have me listen to each breath that calls. I waited till you called so strongly I *must* come.’

‘You were afraid.’

‘I am not.’

‘I called at last.’

‘I made you call. It was my voice within you making you force me.’

‘You thought that you would lose yourself?’

‘And I know now that I have found myself.’

‘I thought to give, yet I have gained.’

‘We both have gained—an Immortality.’

‘Was ever world so beautiful? Look at the dawn that silvers in the east. The seas grow purple.’

‘A little cloud that hung all cold and grey is flushing into golden life. The sun’s warm kisses make it blush. It is turned crimson. See now, the dark has gone, the world is wide, and it is ours. No time shall make us old, nor can death touch us. Love grows greater till it reaches Heaven.’

‘It has reached Heaven; in Heaven it came to us.’

‘High Heaven is in our hearts—our hearts.’

‘Our heart, for we have one. One life, one death, one Immortality.’

Then the sun rose.

THE END

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